Mrs. F. S. Bennett

HOW IT GREW

The Story of the Woman's Organization in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America

TOLD IN NARRATIVE AND DRAMA

Pres. Ch. U.S.A. Women's Organization

Compiled and Prepared by

MRS. F. S. BENNETT

As Presented at the

QUADRENNIAL MEETING

ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY

May 15, 1942

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ONE cannot be too grateful for those men and women who handed down to on-coming generations dated accounts of the small—but vital—beginnings of the woman's organization in the Presbyterian Church; or too appreciative of the men and women who in these later years have scanned dusty volumes and manuscripts, gleaning a bit here and a bit there and so recording them as to make possible a fairly consecutive picture of the growth of this organization.

The absolute accuracy of all statements cannot be dogmatically stated, but no fact is used that is not founded on what seems unimpeachable testimony and that is not fully authenticated. Errors are of omission.

The compiler offers her grateful thanks to all those men and women from 1800 to 1942 whose help has made this task possible.

(Mrs. F. S.) M. Katharine Bennett

NOTE

To produce HOW IT GREW in full requires a production time of approximately two hours. However, it is possible so to shorten the running stories of the Narrator as to keep the time within an hour and three-quarters or an hour and a half. It will be recognized, too, that each dramatic episode is a unit in itself and can be given singly. Or the five episodes might be presented at five consecutive meetings, the narrative in each case being used as a connecting link on the one hand and an introduction on the other. Again, if it is impossible to present it as a play, it might be used as a reading program at a number of meetings.

PROLOGUE

THE WOMEN'S JOINT COMMITTEE

of the Boards of

NATIONAL MISSIONS, FOREIGN MISSIONS, AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

SCENE: Committee Room at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York—1942

Members of the Committee (actual names):

MRS. JOHN M. BEATTY
MISS EMMA JESSIE OGG
MRS. RUSH TAGGART
MRS. CHARLES H. CORBETT
MRS. VINCENT T. SHIPLEY
MRS. DONALD S. CHILDS
MRS. JAMES M. HOWARD
MRS. FREDERIC M. PAIST
MRS. JOHN H. MILLS
MISS ELINOR K. PURVES
MRS. REX S. CLEMENTS
MRS. JOHN J. HOPKINS
MRS. ALBERT G. PARKER, JR.
MRS. LOUIS ENGLER
MRS. L. L. MARCELL

Secretaries: MISS ANN ELIZABETH TAYLOR
MISS GERTRUDE SCHULTZ
MISS MARY AMELIA STEER

(Committee enters carrying brief cases, knitting bags, etc. Many greetings, much talking. A group of three form a conspicuous huddle, obviously discussing some matter of immediate interest. Individuals settle themselves with some fuss. Several begin knitting at once. Mrs. Hopkins settles down to read paper handed to her. Chairman makes several unsuccessful attempts to get silence. Finally loud raps of gavel bring forth quiet.)

MRS. PAIST: Will the meeting please come to order without further delay! Since this is an adjourned meeting, we have no minutes to wrestle with. You will recall that at our session last night we covered items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 on the docket, omitting item 5. The chief item was the fine report by Mrs. Clements, chairman of the sub-committee on women's meetings at the General Assembly. Also, we were well launched on the report of the Special Committee on Form of Organization, appointed to study the present situation and make recommendations to the Quadrennial Committee, at the request of that body. If there is no objection, we shall begin where we left off, which I believe was at the bottom of page 7 of the report.

(Much rustling of papers and whispering. Call to order again.)

We are very glad to have Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Taggart with us at this session, and are sorry they were unable to be with us last night, because they missed the very important discussion of the first six pages. My suggestion is that Mrs. Hopkins and Mrs. Taggart put down their knitting and read those pages now, so that we shall not have to spend precious time catching up.

MRS. HOPKINS: I read them while waiting for the meeting to come to order, Madam Chairman.

MRS. TAGGART: I am familiar with the content of those pages also, Madam Chairman.

MRS. PAIST: Very well, then we can proceed—

MRS. MARCELL: But, Madam Chairman, should we not pick up item 5 on the docket before we plunge into this longer and more exacting business?

MRS. PAIST: Yes, of course. Thank you for reminding me. In my eagerness to get to the business of the day I must not overlook the link we have with an exciting new area of interest. Mrs. Beatty, as coopted member from the Women's Joint Committee on the Committee on Social Education and Action of the Board of Christian Education, will you give us your report?

MRS. BEATTY (*speaking with emphasis*): It will be a brief report, Madam Chairman. I have attended two meetings and found them not only interesting but exciting. The personnel of this committee is outstanding. It includes not only ministers but a variety of laymen and laywomen, heads of industry, lawyers, professors, and even a young and attractive woman organizer of labor for the CIO. Its most recent action was a recommendation for the appointment of an advisory council on labor, which shall keep the committee (and through it the whole Church) informed on developments in the field of industrial relationships, and the Church's responsibility in this area.

MRS. PAIST: Thank you, Mrs. Beatty. Has the committee any questions to ask Mrs. Beatty?

MISS PURVES: May I ask why such a committee is recommended in this one particular field of social concern, when the committee's work includes so many other pressure areas?

MRS. BEATTY: Because when the war is over organized labor will be in an even more strategic position than it is at present.

MRS. PAIST: How can we tell that? How do we know that there will *be any* organized labor when the war is over?

MRS. BEATTY: We don't actually know, of course, but it seems reasonable to believe that, with the crux of our defense problem in the hands of labor, when the war is won—

MRS. PAIST (*calling for order*): We must not let ourselves be side-tracked into discussion at this point. Mrs. Beatty, have you any recommendation on which we need to act?

MRS. BEATTY: No, Madam Chairman.

MRS. PAIST: Since there is no recommendation, I shall entertain a motion that this report be received.

MRS. MARCELL: I so move.

MRS. CORBETT: I second it.

MRS. PAIST: You have heard the motion. Is there discussion? If not, all those in favor? Opposed? The motion is carried. Now we may proceed with the pressing matter of organization.

MRS. CORBETT: Madam Chairman, you remember we have had a meeting of

another sub-committee since last night. Should we not have its report as indicated in item 7 in the docket?

MRS. PAIST (*consulting the docket*): What! Another committee! Ah, yes, programs! Miss Ogg, I did not mean to put you on the shelf. You may come down now and bring your report with you.

MISS OGG: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My report is also brief. The committee on program materials met this morning and heard a report from the sub-committee on Spiritual Life Groups, of which Mrs. Nesbitt is chairman. We wish to report, for information, that the list of books recommended by the Spiritual Life Groups Committee will be incorporated in the flier of devotional materials issued by the Board of Christian Education, a procedure which will save paper and some expense, and is quite logical because the Board always asks for our suggestions for the flier anyway. Also we have the following recommendation to submit: That the Spiritual Life booklet for 1942-43 be designed to cover the subjects included in the first booklet of the series, which were found so helpful to groups all over the country.

MRS. PAIST: Is this recommendation clear to everyone? Are there any questions? If not, what will you do with it?

MRS. CHILDS: I move its approval.

MRS. TAGGART: I second it.

MRS. PAIST: Is there any discussion? All in favor? Opposed? The report of the sub-committee on program materials is accepted. Now then, if anyone has any other business, legitimate or otherwise, will she bring it out now or forever after hold her peace, because time is going and we must get back to this organization project. (*A moment of silence follows.*) Thank goodness! I was afraid somebody would think of something else that needed doing.

MRS. PARKER: Madam Chairman, I hate to put off this discussion of future plans for the women's organizations of our church, but as a very new member of this Women's Joint Committee I should like to know more about the beginnings of this three-Board cooperation. How did it come about that the women of the Mission Boards and the women of the Board of Christian Education found that they had so much in common?

MRS. PAIST: I think that is a very good question and for the benefit of our new members on this committee we should take time to review the past. Who can give us very briefly the story of the beginnings of this committee? (*Pause—one-half minute.*)

MISS OGG: As I am one of the few who has served through this period perhaps I can begin and others can fill in whatever I may leave out. To make a clear picture it does seem necessary to go back at least as far as the year 1923 when, by action of the General Assembly, the structure of the national Presbyterian agencies was greatly changed.

MRS. CORBETT: This intrigues me! To what "structure" does Miss Ogg refer?

MISS OGG: In 1923 the Presbyterian Church had thirteen Boards—

MRS. CLEMENTS (*interrupting*): There is something to be thankful for that one does not have to learn the names and functions of all of those!

MISS OGG: Well, the General Assembly appointed a committee to study this whole "structure" (*a bit of a grimace toward Mrs. Corbett*) and to recommend changes if it felt such to be necessary.

MRS. PARKER: And what *did* it do?

MISS OGG: It recommended that there be consolidations and that there be created four new Boards to care for the work formerly done by the thirteen.

MRS. CHILDS: Were there not Woman's Boards then?

MISS OGG: Indeed there were—two grand and active ones, the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions and the Woman's Board of Home Missions, each having its own headquarters at 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City. (*Women listen expectantly.*)

MRS. CLEMENTS: What *did* become of them?

MISS OGG: They went into the consolidations! The Woman's Board of Foreign Missions and the then Board of Foreign Missions were united to form the present Board of Foreign Missions.

MRS. CORBETT: Why, of course, I see it! The Woman's Board of *Home* Missions was united to the then Board of *Home* Missions to form—

MISS OGG: Quite right—to form the new Board of *National* Missions! Only in this case four other Boards were also placed in this merger, the Freedmen's Board, Sabbath School Work, etc.

MRS. PARKER: I am not quite sure that I see what all of this, interesting as it is, has to do with my question.

MRS. PAIST: I think I do: when these consolidations took place women became members of the new general Boards! (*All look a bit excited.*)

MISS OGG: Exactly. And women were also placed on the third new Board, the Board of Christian Education—

MRS. CORBETT: And as church women they were all accustomed to working together.

MRS. TAGGART: So they naturally went on doing it under the changed conditions!

MISS OGG: Well, not quite as simple as that, but in 1929 there was held at St. Paul a conference of one hundred picked women who discussed two major topics: the status of women in the Presbyterian Church and the program of women's church organizations. (*Miss Purves is hunting through her brief case and pulls out a leaflet and, as Miss Ogg stops, speaks.*)

MISS PURVES: And here is the very action that we took at St. Paul, saying (*reads*): "Inasmuch as we as a conference favor an educational and service program involving the interests of the Board of National Missions, Board of Foreign Missions, and Board of Christian Education, we recommend that we recognize also a financial responsibility for the work of the three Boards."

MRS. TAGGART: And the questions we are facing now in 1942 have been in process since 1923? Interesting, I call it, that there has been such careful, even if slow, study and planning.

MRS. PARKER: So this is how the Board of Christian Education comes into the story? *This* (*waving her hand around the circle*) is a committee made up of members of three Boards, not two.

MISS PURVES: Madam Chairman, I think we should say here that for many years the women of the two Mission Boards met to discuss matters of common interest, for they realized that the movement toward joint home and foreign synodical and presbyterial societies made possible and necessary a joint approach to these societies.

MRS. CHILDS: That was the Council of Women's Committees, wasn't it?

MISS PURVES: Yes. Then after 1923 when there were women members of the Board of Christian Education and when the women's societies of the Church began to see that some of the work in which they were engaged was related to the Board of Christian Education: Stewardship, Young People's work, etc., it seemed wise and necessary to bring together women from the three Boards to discuss matters of common interest. At first there were informal meetings, but in 1935 the Women's Joint Committee of the Boards of National Missions, Foreign Missions, and Christian Education was formally constituted as it exists today. Does that answer the question?

MRS. PARKER: Yes, I think it does. What we have today as I understand it is an arrangement which ties synodical and presbyterial societies directly to the two Missions Boards and, also, a movement towards cooperation with the Board of Christian Education, expressed through the Women's Joint Committee. And this plan for an inclusive presbyterial society which seems to be in the air would make this three-Board relationship more definite and those synodical and presbyterial societies which become inclusive would be auxiliary to all three Boards. It this correct?

MRS. PAIST: We are all thrilled, I am sure, by the possibility for a wider and deeper fellowship among the women of the Presbyterian Church. I wonder what our grandmothers and those who pioneered, in the days when women first began to dare to meet as women, would think of us if they saw us now. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the curtain of the past could be rolled away and we could watch the women of past generations as they built this great organization of Presbyterian women dedicated to the task of winning the world for Jesus Christ?

MRS. SHIPLEY: Oh, let's drop our business for the day and consider the heritage which is ours. It will give us fresh courage for the tasks ahead if we try to visualize those little bands of women who more than one hundred years ago started this movement of Presbyterian women which has grown to such proportions today that 288,635 women are reported as members in 6,738 societies in local churches. Let us close our eyes to the present and the future and catch the vision of "How It Grew."

(*All sit back with closed eyes as curtain goes down.*)

THE STORY

Narrator: "In the beginning" is an intriguing term: as one pursues its implications one finds it is often impossible to designate a factual point. There was a first public word, a first happening, but back of these there were thought and impulse, the stirrings of minds toward the new and the unusual—toward the unconventional and the daring.

Madame Curie, the great French scientist, discoverer of radium, wrote: "If I see anything vital around me it is precisely that spirit of adventure which seems indestructible and is akin to curiosity." How we church women of these later years may rejoice in that vital "spirit of adventure" that one hundred and forty years ago broke into action through women who lived in a period when a petition in behalf of the first cotton factory of Massachusetts stated that it would "afford employment to a great number of women and children, many of whom will be otherwise useless if not burdensome to society." A period that also denied to young women educational advantages so that even among the well-to-do women could neither read nor write. Some towns allowed "the girls to assemble for instruction in the public school from six to eight in the morning, during the summer months" while Boston, in 1826, distinguished itself by closing the girls' "High School (so-called) because so many girls were clamoring for admission."

Our "in the beginning" is at the point where these first stirrings eventuated in recorded action. But back of that we know through the words of churchmen that somewhere women were quietly banding themselves together for prayer and service. In 1808 the Rev. Gideon Blackburn wrote his fellow ministers: "Ask your female societies to pray for me and my little Indians"—the first *direct* reference of which we know to women's organizations in the Presbyterian Church. And in the Minutes of the General Assembly of 1811 it is recorded that "It has pleased God to excite pious women also to combine in associations for the purpose of aiding, by their voluntary contributions, one or the other of the above institutions (Missionary, Tract, and Bible Societies). Benevolence is always attractive, but when dressed in a female form possesses peculiar charms. Hard, indeed, must that heart be which can resist the example and solicitation that are for the promotion of the public good. We hope the spirit which has animated the worthy women of whom we speak, will spread and animate other bosoms."

The commendation of — and thus the authorization for — women's church organizations fell on fertile soil we may believe, for within a few years many groups came into existence, bearing such names as Female Mite Societies, Female Cent Societies, Female Praying Societies, Dorcas Societies, etc. It would be a joy to follow the personal story of each one of these groups in so far as their stories have been preserved for us: unfortunately those women did not realize that they were "starting something" unique, and few saved written records.

It is interesting that the *first authenticated* account of such an organization has been preserved for us through the understanding and appreciation of a *male* descendant of one of the founders. Because of his understanding, we may invite you to join us at the first meeting of the Female Cent Society of Hopewell, New York, Hudson Presbytery:

EPISODE I

MEETING OF FEMALE CENT SOCIETY
HOPEWELL, HUDSON PRESBYTERY, NEW YORK
FEBRUARY 2, 1814*

At the home of the REV. ISAAC VAN DOREN, *pastor*
MRS. JANE BARCLAY, *presiding*
(20-25 women—only 9 take part)

Characters: MRS. BARCLAY, President
MISS BULL (young woman not too bright)
MRS. THOMPSON (wishes to understand)
MRS. OLIVER (doubting Thomas)
MISS CRAWFORD (anxious)
MISS LINDEMAN (anticipated)
MRS. VAN DOREN (keeps the peace)
MISS GILLESPIE (belligerent)
MISS CAHILL, Secretary

Costumes: Winter clothes of the period.

(As curtain goes up the president and two other women are returning to their seats—one of them is closing a door. Audience looking toward them.)

MRS. BARCLAY: I know we have all been much helped by the beautiful sermon we have just heard from our pastor on those verses from Proverbs 31:20-26 and 27 (*reads*) "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she stretcheth forth her hands to the needy. . . . She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Shall we all ponder these words that they may bear fruit in our lives? (*pause*) (*deprecatingly*) It seems necessary that we should have a constitution to guide this society and we are asked to consider one that has been prepared and to decide whether it will meet our needs.

MISS BULL: I do not quite understand. Just what is a constitution?

MRS. THOMPSON: It is a set of rules so we shall know what to do in our meetings.

MRS. OLIVER: But what rules do we need? Do we know?

MRS. BARCLAY: Our pastor feels that we shall find it much simpler to carry on our meetings if we have some rules.

MISS CRAWFORD (*anxiously*): I do hope this *Female Cent Society* is not going to be too difficult.

MISS LINDEMAN: I have been anticipating with much joy coming together with other ladies—I hope I can understand it all.

MRS. BARCLAY: I am sure Mr. Van Doren, our pastor, who has great experience in meetings, does know what we need. Perhaps Mrs. Van Doren can explain about this constitution.

MRS. VAN DOREN: I am afraid that I do not know more than the rest of you

* Based on the minutes of the organizational meeting.

do but Mr. Van Doren says that it is better to know beforehand what is right to do rather than to wait until mistakes have been made and then have to try to correct them.

MISS GILLESPIE (*with some snap*): Well, let's read these rules and see what they are—I don't suppose we have to say "Yes" if we don't like them.
(*Group looks somewhat perturbed at this frankness.*)

MRS. VAN DOREN (*meekly*): I am sure Miss Gillespie is right—Mr. Van Doren would not want you to go against your consciences.

MISS GILLESPIE: Well, let's get on. Who *can* read this constitution?

MRS. BARCLAY: Miss Cahill, you are to be the secretary of this society—will you please read the constitution to us?

MISS CAHILL (*perturbed*): Oh, I did not know I should have to do such things, but I will try.
(*Reads from handwritten manuscript, not too fluently*):
1. "This Society shall be known by the name of The Female Cent Society of Hopewell."

MISS GILLESPIE: That seems safe enough!

MRS. BARCLAY: Do all the ladies agree to that name?

MRS. THOMPSON: I thought we had agreed that it was good.

MRS. BARCLAY: We had but when you have a constitution you have to agree all together. Do you? (*Much nodding of heads, but no words.*) Will you please read the next?

MISS CAHILL: 2. "The objects of this Society shall be to assist poor but pious young men in prosecuting their studies at the Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, and the establishment at Hopewell of a Female Library: the money collected to be equally divided between the two objects."
(*Silence for a moment as the women look at each other.*)

MISS BULL: What is the place where the "pious young men" need help?

MRS. BARCLAY: Mrs. Van Doren, can you answer Miss Bull's question?

MRS. VAN DOREN: It is a school called a "Theological Seminary" where young men are to go to study the Bible and learn to preach so there can be ministers for new churches.

MISS GILLESPIE (*suspiciously*): I never heard of such a place before.

MRS. VAN DOREN: It was just begun in 1812—two years ago.

MISS CRAWFORD: Who teaches these young men?

MRS. VAN DOREN: Older ministers.

MISS LINDEMAN: This seems to me wise for the Scripture says, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"
(*Much nodding of heads.*)

MRS. BARCLAY: Miss Lindeman has helped us I am sure. Can we say "Yes"? Would you put up your hands if you agree? (*All do, but some rather tentatively and not very high—pause*) Now, Miss Cahill, we can go on.

MISS CAHILL: "Any person by paying Six Cents shall be entitled to membership; and One Cent a week shall continue it."

MRS. OLIVER: Can a lady not come to the meetings if she has not the Cent to bring with her? (MRS. BARCLAY *looks at* MRS. VAN DOREN.)

MRS. VAN DOREN: Oh, I am sure she could: if she has no money then perhaps she could bring double the next time, but I am sure Mr. Van Doren would not want the ladies to stay away.

MISS CRAWFORD: There seems so little money these days! (*Silence*)

MRS. BARCLAY: Shall we try it this way? (*Some nod, some put up hands.*) Now, Miss Cahill, what next?

MISS CAHILL: "Any person, by paying Five Dollars at any one payment shall be a member for life. (*Audible gasp*)

MISS BULL: Would anyone *ever* do that?

MISS GILLESPIE: They might—but does that mean that for all their lives they wouldn't have to pay any more?

MRS. BARCLAY: That is what I understand.

MISS LINDEMAN: Oh, how I wish I could be a Life Member.

MISS CAHILL (*on nod from* MRS. BARCLAY): "The Officers of this Society shall be a President, a Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and five Collectors."

MRS. THOMPSON: What do the Collectors do?

MRS. BARCLAY: They gather the money from the members and give it to the Treasurer.

MISS GILLESPIE: Well, if we are going to have this Society, we'll *need* these women.

MRS. BARCLAY: Shall we then say "Yes." (*All do.*)

MISS CAHILL: "The Society shall hold its Annual Meeting on the first Monday of February and a semi-annual Meeting on the first Monday of June. At the Annual Meeting the officers of this Society shall make a written report of the transactions of the Society during the year past, accompanied with such remarks as they may deem proper."

MRS. BARCLAY: Will you have this as it is? (*Some nod, a few say "Yes."*) (MRS. BARCLAY *nods at* MISS CAHILL *to go on.*)

MISS CAHILL: "At every annual meeting the officers of this Society shall be chosen, and always by ballot."

MISS BULL: What does "always by ballot" mean?

MRS. VAN DOREN: Each lady writes on a piece of paper the name of the one she wants for an officer and these papers are the ballots. The lady whose name is on the most ballots becomes the officer.

MISS LINDEMAN: Doesn't this seem much bother when we shall all be so grateful to the ladies who are willing to do the work?

MRS. BARCLAY: The gentlemen seem to think this is necessary—they say "It is the *democratic way.*" (*Some shrugging of shoulders*)

MISS GILLESPIE: Oh, well, let us say "Yes" and get on. (*They say "Yes" with no word from the President.*)
(*She nods to the Secretary.*)

MISS CAHILL: "The Library shall be exclusively of a religious and moral nature, and no book shall be purchased but such as shall be approved of by the minister and Elders of the Church at Hopewell, together with the officers of this Society."

MRS. THOMPSON: I am sure we do not need to talk about that. How could *we* decide on books?

MRS. BARCLAY: Do you all agree?
(*Women say "Yes"—but not too certainly.*)

MISS CAHILL: "The Library shall be exclusively for the use of the members of the Society; and no lady shall keep any one book at any time longer than four weeks."

MRS. OLIVER: Four weeks does not seem time enough to read a book carefully; most of us do not have many free minutes in a day.

MISS GILLESPIE: Well, I suppose other women would want the book too: if one woman could not read it all in four weeks she could wait then until other women had at least seen it.

MISS CRAWFORD: Do you think the gentlemen will pick books we can understand?

MISS GILLEPSIE: We *must* understand what they choose! and (*looking severely at the younger women*) those of us who have been to school must show that schooling is a help to women as well as to men. It's the only way young women will ever get the same chances the young men get. (*Each woman reacts as to character.*)

MRS. BARCLAY: Dear Miss Gillespie, *please* let us not bring such disturbing questions into our first meeting. Let us be thankful today that we are not only *allowed* to hold a meeting like this, but encouraged to do so.

MISS GILLESPIE (*audibly*): "Allowed," indeed! (*Again individual reactions*)

MRS. BARCLAY (*hastily*): Will you all agree?
(*All say "Yes" except* MISS GILLESPIE.)

MISS CAHILL: This is the last rule—"Every person subscribing to the funds of this Society shall be at liberty to designate to which of its objects her money shall be applied."

MISS GILLESPIE: Glad to see we have some rights!

MRS. VAN DOREN: But I shall hope that in wishing books for ourselves we shall not forget the pious young men at Princeton who are learning to be ministers.

MISS BULL: I am sure we shall not—they sound so interesting.
(*Looks embarrassed as some of the women look at her.*)

MRS. BARCLAY: Do we all agree to this? (*Some laugh as this follows on* MISS BULL'S *statement.*)

MRS. BARCLAY (*embarrassed*): I mean that each lady can say to which of the two objects she wishes her money to go.

ALL: Yes—decidedly so.

MRS. VAN DOREN: We now have a Constitution but it seems that we must elect regular officers to conduct the future meetings and to do the necessary work between meetings.

MISS GILLESPIE: How can we pick people right now?

MRS. VAN DOREN: Mr. Van Doren thought you might be glad to have some names given to you today so he with the Elders made out a list for this first year. He thought if you elected these ladies for one year then next year you would know whom you wanted and would choose for yourselves. And this Constitution says the Society shall elect officers every year.

MISS GILLESPIE: "By ballot!" Who are these ladies the gentlemen have picked for us, Mrs. Van Doren?

MRS. VAN DOREN: Not "the gentlemen," Miss Gillespie, but the honored officers of our church! They suggest to us:

Mrs. Jane Barclay, President
Mrs. Hannah Thompson, Vice-President
Mrs. Jane Thompson, Treasurer
Miss Eleanor Cahill, Secretary
Miss Sarah Bull
Miss Frances Cahill
Miss Sally Crawford
Miss Catherine Johnston
Miss Susan Lindeman
} Collectors

MRS. VAN DOREN: Would you wish to elect these ladies?

MRS. OLIVER: Yes—let us do so and thank the ladies for being willing to do all the work—and the gentlemen for finding such splendid officers. (*All vote "Yes."*)

MRS. BARCLAY: I thank you all for being so helpful this afternoon. The Constitution has taken so much time that I am afraid it is time for us to go home. Please remember that our next meeting will be held on the first Monday of June, according to the Constitution we have just agreed upon.

MISS LINDEMAN: I have enjoyed this meeting so much that I wish we did not have to wait so long before having another.

MRS. THOMPSON: Perhaps some time we can have a meeting at least every two months—that would be nice.

MRS. OLIVER: What could we talk about so often?

MISS CRAWFORD: Do you think one of the young men from Princeton could come and tell us about his studies? (*Interest on part of women.*)

MISS BULL: Where is this Princeton?

MRS. VAN DOREN: It is way down in New Jersey—way beyond New York City. It would take him four days on horseback to get here, I fear; and of course he wouldn't have a horse. (*Disappointment expressed.*) But I will ask Mr. Van Doren what he thinks.

MRS. THOMPSON: It would certainly be more interesting to send our money for some one we had really seen.

MRS. BARCLAY: Ladies, I am afraid we must stop. Mrs. Van Doren will want to be seeing to her own work. Thank you again.

(*Much stirring about as curtain closes slowly.*)

THE STORY

Narrator: We cannot leave the first society that preserved its minutes for us without a word as to its continuance. We slip into its first Annual Meeting on February 4, 1815, to learn:

"That at the formation of the Society in February, 1814, the number of members was 28, and that in a year these have increased to 92.

"That the sum of Forty-four Dollars and 90½ Cents has been collected from the different members, most of whom have paid the amount of the subscription for one year, although the greater part of them have been members only since the semi-annual meeting in June.

"That one of the members has paid the sum of $5.00 and thereby becomes *member for life.*

"That the sum of $31.65½ has been expended in the purchase of books toward the formation of a Library, leaving a balance in favour of the Treasurer of $13.25; which sum, together with what may be received till the next semi-annual meeting in June, the Committee recommend to be expended in increasing the Library. For although the Society should, and doubtless does, feel itself bound sacredly to appropriate ultimately the one-half of its income to assist pious youth in the prosecution of their studies at the Theological Seminary at Princeton, agreeably to the Constitution, yet, as the prosperity of the Society appears to be intimately connected with, if not greatly to depend upon, the present enlargement of the Library, the Committee are of opinion that the charitable object of the Society in regard to the education of youth for the Ministry will thereby be ultimately promoted."

A sudden outburst of women's organizations in the churches leads us to look for particular causes that brought about such activity: undoubtedly the approbation of the General Assembly of 1811, already quoted, led to a more favorable attitude on the part of local pastors and when in 1819 the Treasurer of the General Assembly made "separate notation" of contributions from Women's Organizations, noting the "receipt of gifts for the Educational Fund from the Female Mite Society of Scrubgrass and from the Female Benevolence Society of Fairfield," such approval was stimulated.

In so many cases were these gifts directed toward the support of "poor but pious young men" at Princeton Theological Seminary that one may logically conclude that pastors were peculiarly favorable to organizations that would aid in the support of candidates for the ministry.

In those days of expensive and slow postal service news spread as always by word of mouth—often through itinerant ministers who preached in homes as well as in vacant churches, and it was "news" when women were organizing themselves into church societies, self-managed and self-supporting.

Following close after Hopewell, there was organized in New Jersey, on September 12, 1814, a society then known as the "Chatham Female Charitable Society," which has had a notable history and is now The Missionary Society of the First Presbyterian Church of Madison, New Jersey.

A "Female Praying Society," of the (now) Market Square Presbyterian Church of Harrisburg, was formed in 1812. Organized as a Praying Society, this band of women speedily found service to be rendered and became a sewing society "for the purpose of assisting a young man, Isaac McInvaine, who had no means of obtaining a Theological education": their "early offerings to Foreign Missions were not only in prayer, and money, *one* gave herself and after marriage sailed away to the Sandwich Islands,* the voyage by way of Cape Horn taking nine or ten months. Again the ladies formed a sewing circle and prepared her outfit." These women did not feel that they "were distinctly called to form themselves into a Society," with a Constitution and formal declaration of purpose but except for such formality this Band of praying women seems also to have been a Band of working women and as offshoots therefrom there were organized the two Woman's Missionary Societies of Market Square Church.

It was on November 14, 1815, that "The Female Charitable Society" of South Salem, New York—Bedford Church, Westchester Presbytery—was organized in the home of the pastor, the Rev. Jacob Burbank. It was a new house, we are told, and "no doubt the gathering on that November afternoon was attended by the females of this quiet country place with some curiosity" to see the double folding doors between the parlors as such were unknown. But in spite of natural curiosity these women of South Salem produced a most beautiful preamble to the Constitution they adopted, and under which they still serve:

"We, whose names are undersigned, being made partially acquainted with the state of the heathen by recent and authentic accounts; particularly of vast multitudes of Pagans in Asia, do sincerely commiserate their condition and feel desirous, if possible, to contribute our mite for their relief. We feel encouraged to make some exertion for this purpose by the example of others who have associated and succeeded in carrying their pious and benevolent designs into effect.

"We highly approve of such societies and the spirit and principle by which they appear to be conducted; and trusting that we are actuated by the same spirit, we feel desirous of imitating their example. We think that no charity is more estimable than that which has for its direct object, the everlasting interests of the souls of man. . . .

"Though we alone should not be able to effect any very important purpose, yet, we consider that by the united exertions of the pious and benevolent throughout the Christian world much may be done to alleviate the miseries of our fellow creatures. . . ."

The Constitution of South Salem Society follows much the same form as that of the Hopewell Society, but South Salem adds, "This Society shall be composed of females, either married or unmarried": dues are fifty-two cents a year and "neglect to pay this sum for two years in succession" causes a loss of membership!

One-half of the funds of the Society were in the beginning given to Foreign Missions and one-half for the use of "the heathen school in America"—which seems to have been a school opened in 1817 for Cherokee Indians. It was this same Society that later "contributed $50 to the Board, and requested that this donation be published in the *Christian Advocate* and a copy be donated to them.

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* Now Hawaiian Islands.

The Board decided to adopt this policy with respect to any society donating $20 or more."

What fascinating bits these are that open avenues of research: On December 4, 1816, a Presbyterian church was organized at Hannibal, New York State. Among those reported present was the Rev. Henry Smith, *Missionary of the Oneida Female Missionary Society.* What is the story back of that name? Did the Oneida Society perhaps antedate even Hopewell? We do not yet know, but from some musty trunk or desk it may be that word will later come.

The year 1817 records that "We the Females of the town of Butternuts are convened this 26th day of May in the year of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1817, for what we deem a laudable object."

The year 1818 takes us to Poland, Ohio, where on October 17, we find the new "Female Charitable Society of Poland" writing into its Constitution an addition to South Salem's restrictions: "This Society shall consist wholly of Females, both married and single, and *no other shall be admitted as members.*" What local situation is covered by those last words? Did husbands and brothers, and perhaps lovers, hear of such pleasant gatherings that they too wished to join? Or were church officials a bit anxious as to what those women might say or do? There is no answer from the past—the simple record of independence and exclusiveness stands to intrigue women of the next century.

In June 1821, a group of women met at Lawrenceville, New Jersey, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Green, mother of John C. Green who founded the School of Science at Princeton University, and organized the Lawrenceville Woman's Missionary Society for the "dissemination of religious and missionary intelligence." The reading that was accomplished at the weekly meetings both as to amount and character would challenge a college student: it ranged from Fox's *Book of Martyrs* and the Minutes of the General Assembly, to Hannah Moore on *Christianity* and the *Lives of the Twelve Apostles.* As one read the others sewed, preparing boxes for the "Heathen" and shirts and underwear, as well as "false collars" and "false bosoms" for the students of Princeton Theological Seminary. It was the custom to call the names of absentees rather than of those present and of registering them in the Secretary's Book.

So nearly as can be now learned the above society and the Princeton Female Society for the support of a Female School in India, organized in 1822, were largely composed of the same women so the two are being united in an episode, an episode chosen as it is, so far as can be learned, the first account of a Woman's Organization that sent out its own missionary.

EPISODE II

PRINCETON FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY ORGANIZED IN OCTOBER 1816 AND PRINCETON FEMALE SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPORT OF A FEMALE SCHOOL IN INDIA, ORGANIZED IN OCTOBER 1822*

The meeting depicted was held in October, 1823

Characters: MRS. ALEXANDER, Leader
MRS. MILLER, Secretary
MRS. JONES
MRS. DAVIES
MRS. ROBERTS
MRS. WILSON
MRS. SMITH
MRS. HODGE
MRS. GREEN
MRS. EDWARDS
MRS. STOCKTON
A few silent members

Costumes: Of the period.

(The curtain rises on a group of women sewing. It is assumed that the patron has already opened the meeting with prayer as it was not decorous for the ladies of the churches to pray publicly, even when in gatherings of women only.)

MRS. ALEXANDER: It is time for our meeting to begin, but one of our members is yet to come and I do not like to take up our business until all are here.

MRS. MILLER: While we wait, let us redeem the time and continue our sewing on these shirts for the students in our Theological Seminary here in Princeton.

MRS. JONES: It is truly a privilege to work for these godly young gentlemen.

MRS. ROBERTS: Indeed it is. I heard one of them deliver the sermon last Sabbath night at Maidenhead, a most eloquent and edifying discourse.

MRS. SMITH: When I see those young men who are preparing themselves for the ministry, I wonder if there will ever be enough churches to use them.

MRS. DAVIES: So many people are moving out of the towns and way off across the Delaware River to take up land that in time there will be churches for them I am sure.

MRS. ROBERTS: Yes, no doubt there will be, but the wilderness seems to be so great I wonder how these young men will find the people.

MRS. ALEXANDER: It would be wonderful if a young minister could go with each group that goes toward the West. (*Pause*)
While we wait would you like me to read a letter which has come to Dr. Ashbel Green from Betsy Stockton, *our own* missionary?
(*All look pleased and nod in agreement, making ejaculatory sounds—"How wonderful," etc.*)

MRS. DAVIES: Pray do.

MRS. GREEN (*timidly*): You know that I am a stranger among you. I have heard the name of Betsy Stockton often but I do not know who she is. Would you tell me please before her letter is read?

* Based on letters furnished by the Princeton Society.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Dear Mrs. Green, I am so glad that you asked, for we think it is a very wonderful story. When Dr. Ashbel Green married Elizabeth Stockton, she owned a slave girl named Betsy. Dr. Green was so opposed to slavery that he asked his wife to free Betsy—which she did, keeping her on as a servant and paying her regular wages. She was so intelligent that the Greens educated her and she was so pious that when a short time ago she offered herself as a missionary to the Sandwich Islands, to go with Mr. and Mrs. Steward, she was accepted—this letter is from her, written on the boat far out in the Pacific Ocean.

MRS. GREEN (*startled*): But I do not understand— if she was a slave she must be a colored woman!

MRS. ALEXANDER: She is—this is an instance as to how God's mercy can transcend lines of color and race. She is to be a teacher in a school in the Sandwich Islands. Perhaps before Betsy's letter is read Mrs. Hodge would tell us of the account that was in the *Missionary Herald* of January 1823, of the farewell meeting held for the missionaries at New Haven, Connecticut, before they sailed. Will you please, Mrs. Hodge?

MRS. HODGE: I shall be glad to tell what I can remember. Our friends went to New Haven and had to wait there for a few days before the boat sailed. The people in New Haven held many meetings for those who were to depart on the long and perilous journey which will take about half a year, I think.

MRS. MILLER: What courage it must take to start on such a trip—to be away from land for six months!

MRS. JONES: And to find only savages at the end of the long journey!

MRS. STOCKTON: We do know that only those who have great trust and faith could possibly undertake it.

MRS. HODGE: One evening there was a collection taken and the money, about $334.00, was given to the leaders for the mission. That must have cheered them much, I am sure, for there may not be much help for them when they reach those far-away islands.

MRS. EDWARDS: That was wonderful! Did the paper say anything about our Betsy?

MRS. HODGE: Indeed it did, right in the very first part of the article. When the ship was to sail a large concourse of people, who had gone to the wharf to see the missionaries sail, gathered about them and sang, "Blest be the tie that binds": then the farewells were said and the paper told how courageous the parents and friends were when they saw their loved ones going and with what courage the missionaries bade farewell to their native land.

MRS. ALEXANDER (*wiping her eyes*): It would have been wonderful to be there at the wharf.

MRS. MILLER: Indeed it was a privilege to be present on such a solemn and inspiring occasion. And what a joy to us here in Princeton to know that our own Betsy Stockton was among that courageous group of men and women who dared the long sea voyage and the many privations in order to carry the message of the gospel to people so far away.

MRS. ALEXANDER: And now shall we hear from dear Betsy herself—this letter came to Dr. Green but he loaned it to us. Mrs. Stockton, will you please read this letter to us?

MRS. STOCKTON: It is dated: *Ship Thames*, N. Lat. 24° 2′, W. Long. 20° 43′ Dec. 19, 1822.

MRS. JONES: Could anyone tell us where that is?

MRS. DAVIES: I think it is in the Atlantic Ocean.

MRS. STOCKTON (*reads*): "Rev. and Dear Sir: Conscious of the deep interest you take in my welfare, I will endeavor to give you some faint idea of our situation. . . . You no doubt anticipated many of the dangers to which we were to be exposed, but we were called to witness some, before you could have anticipated them. We embarked on the 19th ult.—The boat was sent to land the pilot at 12 o'clock; but having reached the extremity of the Sound, the pilot discovered that we were drifting rapidly on the Race Rock, and returned as speedily as possible to save us from destruction. He remained with us till 4 o'clock, and was then landed at Block Island. . . ."

MRS. EDWARDS: How dreadful! It must have taken courage to go on.

MRS. SMITH: But of course there was nothing else they could do.

MRS. STOCKTON (*continues*): "My friends are all very kind to me. I have not been disappointed in Mr. and Mrs. Steward. Their kindness lays me under renewed obligations to them. I share with them in all their stores—If our water was good, we should be quite comfortable; but it was spoiled before we left port and it has grown no better since. We have cider, porter, beer, etc., but would gladly exchange them all for water. We hope the captain will take in some at St. Jago."

MRS. JONES: And where do you suppose that place is?

MRS. STOCKTON: I am sure I do not know. (*Reads*): "The Captain appears to be a well disposed man, and does everything in his power to render the family happy. He attends prayers with us in the morning, in the cabin, and in the evening on the quarter-deck. . . . We frequently comfort ourselves by reverting to our native country, and reflecting on the prayers which are there ascending in our behalf. . . ."

MRS. JONES: We must ever be more and more in prayer for our friends and especially for Betsy.

MRS. STOCKTON (*continues*): "Sometimes, in imagination, I visit you all in the night, and get a piece of bread; for there is nothing I have wanted so much since I left home, of the provision kind, as bread. Ours is pilot-bread and crackers, and by using them in our sea sickness I took a dislike to them. . . . The cook is a dirty man, and we are obliged to eat without asking questions. While I was sick, they gave me a mug of chicken soup—the grease, the pepper, and the feathers, floated together on the surface. Being on deck, I was unable to get a spoon; so I took out what I could with my fingers, and drank the rest."

MRS. STOCKTON: How terrible!

MRS. STOCKTON (*continues*): "It seemed as good as any I ever tasted; and it nourished me so that I soon began to recover." (*All laugh a bit tremulously.*)

"It would do your heart good, to see with what firmness that part of our family who have been accustomed to better things, bear their trials. . . . It was thought that Mr. S. would not bear them with as much fortitude as Mr. B., because one had been accustomed to a more delicate manner of life than the other. If those who indulge that opinion were with us, they would find that refinement in a missionary is no objection to him. I feel very much ashamed at times, when I look at him, and think what he is, and what I am—If he bears hardships thus, how ought I to bear them?"

MRS. SMITH: Dear Betsy, I am sure she will always be brave and true.

MRS. STOCKTON (*continues*): "Leaving home and becoming a missionary does not, I find, make peace with the great enemy—I find my heart still inclined to forget God, and to wander in the paths of sin. We have no place in the ship to which we can retire, and spend a moment in secret with our God. This is one of my greatest privations; for the poor spark in my breast requires to be constantly fanned by prayer, to keep it from being extinguished. Sometimes I feel as though it were almost out. . . . You will please to excuse my saying so much of myself."

MRS. DAVIES: Dear Betsy.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Let us pray silently for Betsy, now a Herald of the Gospel. (*All kneel for a moment. As they rise, enter Mrs. Wilson.*)

MRS. WILSON (*breathlessly*): Oh, I am most sorry to be delayed; but just as I started to drive out the gate the mare threw her shoe and I had to wait until the groom took her to the blacksmith shop to have her re-shod.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Now that we are all here will the meeting please come to order. (*Ladies put away sewing.*) Our business is to propose a "Constitution for the Princeton Female Society for the support of a Female School in India."

MRS. SMITH: Do you think we need to have any rules? Some of the ladies in the church fear that we are perhaps being too forward and are afraid to meet with us.

MRS. EDWARDS: Yes, I have heard that said. Would it be better to go more slowly and not frighten our sisters from us? (*Some of the silent members nod hesitating approval of this speech.*)

MRS. ALEXANDER: We have in all matters been urged forward by our pastor and by other gentlemen of the church—I am sure we would not have gone forward without their approval.

MRS. STOCKTON: I am not sure of that, Mrs. Alexander, for are we not all of us led by the Spirit and must we not feel that the Spirit is leading us?

MRS. EDWARDS (*pulling a paper from her bag*): I read in the *Christian Advocate* of September, something about Christian women coming together in the churches to work for other women, and I brought the paper with me. Mrs. President, could I read a little of this to the ladies?

MRS. ALEXANDER: Please do, Mrs. Edwards, for we do need to know what is right.

MRS. EDWARDS (*reads*): "The world, it is plain to see, can never be evangelized while that degradation of the female sex exists, which is found in most heathen, and in all Mahometan countries. Not only do women compose a full moiety of the human race, but their influence on the other moiety, as sisters, wives, and mothers, is necessarily great."

MRS. WILSON: The gentlemen do not often grant that in public print.

MRS. EDWARDS (*reading*): "Christian missions have always owed much to Christian women. They not only go as missionaries, and aid most efficiently in the instruction in schools, and in other ways by which the heathen are enlightened and converted, but they take a part in missionary operations at home. To them the funds of almost every benevolent institution, in this era of benevolent enterprises, are deeply indebted. While this is so, we do not well know how to account for it, that they have not done something more, with *a special view to the benefit of their own sex in heathen and Mahometan lands*. We really think that they are called on to do this—and we sincerely rejoice that there is one society formed for this purpose. We have heard that others are about to be formed; and we hope they will increase till they are as numerous as the Christian churches in our land. . . ."
Does that not mean that we have the approval of the clergymen and the church leaders?

MRS. MILLER: That is wonderful, and the preamble of our proposed Constitution fits in with the words we have just heard read, for it says: (*Is at table and reads*)
"It is among the excellent effects of the Christian religion, that it elevates the female sex to their proper rank in society, and gives them the common privileges and hopes of the gospel. Among heathen and Mahometans, females are not regarded as immortal beings, but are considered and treated as little better than the beasts that perish. What Christian woman can think of this without emotion? Without an earnest desire to do all in her power to rescue as many of her sex as possible from this horrible degradation,—and so the undersigned have formed themselves into an association for the erection of a school, or schools, in the Island of Ceylon, for the exclusive instruction of female children in the elements of knowledge, and of Christian piety."

MRS. ALEXANDER: You have all heard the Constitution read at another meeting. Do you want it read again?

A NUMBER: No, oh no. Please no.

MRS. STOCKTON: I remember it says in it that "The Society shall have a patron, who shall be some respectable gentleman to be chosen by the Society at their annual meeting."

MRS. GREEN: Why do we have a patron? Will he give money to the Society?

MRS. STOCKTON: No, but he will come to open our meetings with Scripture and prayers, or else come to close the meeting, which ever is the more convenient for him.

MRS. MILLER: I hope some day we may do all that ourselves!
(*Many silent opinions indicated.*)

MRS. ALEXANDER: How shall we choose our patron?

MRS. STOCKTON: Could we not ask our President and our Secretary to ask some gentleman to do this for us?

MRS. DAVIES: I think that would be the best way.

MRS. ALEXANDER (*nodding toward the Secretary who sits at table taking minutes*): We will try and do this but I am sure Mrs. Miller agrees with me that it is a great responsibility that you have put upon us.

MRS. STOCKTON: We are sure that you will do this well, dear Mrs. Alexander.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Do you want to ask any questions about this Constitution?

MRS. JONES: It sounds very wonderful to me—do you think we can do all those things?

MRS. MILLER: I am sure we can and I know we shall be blessed if we do.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Shall we vote on each article or vote on it all at once?

MRS. STOCKTON: Oh, let us vote once on it all.

MRS. ALEXANDER: Will all the ladies that want this Constitution please say "Yes"?

ALL (*some enthusiasm*): Yes.

MRS. ALEXANDER: And so our meeting ends for today. We have adopted our Constitution, and, henceforth, while we work with our hands for the young men in our Princeton Seminary who are going out to preach the gospel, we shall also work and pray for our own missionary in the Sandwich Islands, and strive towards our goal of sending out teachers to our Female School in heathen India. Before we go we must have the collection. Mrs. Miller, will you please pass the plate?
(*As Mrs. Miller does this the curtain falls.*)

THE STORY

Narrator: As one looks backward a hundred years one is struck by the confusion in organized service for the spreading of the gospel in a land yet without definite boundaries. Great Britain held the Northwest, Mexico, the Southwest; Indian tribes, scattered here and there, were estimated to number two to three millions. The new land was considered by the old as Foreign Mission Territory and as early as 1649 Presbyterians of England and Wales sent $60,000 here for work among the Indians.

The first presbytery was organized at Freehold, New Jersey, in 1706, and in 1717 the Synod of Philadelphia was organized: presbyteries and synods continued to be formed with the spread of the Church, but it was not until 1789 that a General Assembly was organized and that these scattered units were drawn together for consultation and planning. Boundaries were uncertain and so were denominational lines for the General Assembly, having in 1802 voted a Standing Committee of Home Missions and in 1816 a Board of Missions to supersede it, in 1817 approved of the formation of "The United Foreign Missionary Society" composed of Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Associated Reformed, and all other societies that chose to join with them. The field of this new Board was to be the Indians of North America, Mexico, and South America and "other portions of the heathen world." In the above list Congregationalists must have appeared under the term "all other societies," for in 1813 it is noted in the Report to the General Assembly that "The inhabitants of Massachusetts have contributed during the six years last past, a sum probably not less than one-half million of dollars for Missions," and financial help is reported from "The Female Society of Boston."

The divergent beliefs of these various denominational groups made full cooperation difficult and in 1813 we find one group withdrawing to form the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which group was not reunited with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. until 1907. A pungent reason for this separation was recorded by one, John Boyd, who wrote that "Presbyterian preachers are regarded as fatalists and as cold as the Alpine snows."

Again in 1837 division developed in the Church and the "Plan of Union" with the Congregational Church was abrogated; this caused much confusion and for thirty years there were two Assemblies, the Old and the New School, but references to women's societies become more frequent. The Female Mite Society of Scrubgrass and the Female Benevolent Society are noted, but their location is not given: in 1824 a missionary appointed to work in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, is "to receive one-half of his compensation from the Female Domestic Missionary Society of that County."

This, so far as has come to light, is the first *county* organization, probably forerunner of a presbyterial society, and the first mention of women sharing with men in a definite piece of work. "As the twig is bent the tree is inclined"—in the early years of the Nineteenth Century Luzerne pioneered in coordinated work for foreigners.

But the women are moving. In 1827 a Female Tract Society is sending quantities of tracts in English and in German to the missionaries to be used among the people they meet, and in 1833 the Female Benevolent Society of New York City approaches the General Assembly, and that body records:

"The General Assembly highly approve of the Memorial presented by the Female Benevolent Society of New York, and that it be recommended to the pastors and elders of the churches in our connexion and to those respectable denominations who hold correspondence with us, to use a careful judicious influence, to aid the respectable females of their congregations in proper efforts to stay the contemplated moral plague from among the people."

These are tantalizing glimpses of the real activities of women: they also assure women of today, through the adjectives used, of the limiting restrictions still placed about the women and the fear by the Assembly of a too forward attitude on the part of the females in the church. However, another generation is beginning early to assert itself for it is noted that The Young Ladies' Education Society of New York was organized in 1833 with 125 members, to raise money to educate teachers for work among the Indians. A year before that we find in a pastoral letter from the General Assembly to the ministers and churches the following, which may have challenged these younger women:

"*Meetings of pious women by themselves,* for conversation and prayer, whenever they can conveniently be held, we entirely approve. But let not the inspired prohibitions of the great apostle of the Gentiles, as found in his epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy, be violated. To teach and exhort, or to lead in prayer, in public and promiscuous assemblies, is clearly forbidden to women in the Holy Oracles."

Sixty years later, in 1892, we find in the Minutes of the Woman's Executive Committee that the women themselves were beginning to question women's rapid advance in the church for they "Resolved, that while it is often necessary that a speaker representing the Woman's Executive Committee stand in the pulpit so that she may be heard, we de not favor her taking the place of the minister in any way as a rule in the Sabbath services."

At a distance of a hundred years it is not possible to gather the full roster of women's activities in the first half of the last century, but history tells the story of an expanding nation, of new states added to the original thirteen, of an increasing population pushing toward the West, of courageous pioneer women sharing frontier hardships with their men, of greater educational opportunities for girls. Roads were improved and communication increased: progress in one area was soon repeated in another section of the land and it may be assumed that church women shared in the new life; it is more than an assumption, as at that time it was only in the church that women found opportunity to organize and to serve collectively.

Adventure was in the air! Not the least stimulating to church women must have been the hazardous transcontinental trip of the Whitmans and the Spaldings who in 1834 went out under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to serve the Indians of the far Northwest, and who in 1847 died martyrs to their courage and their zeal, but who had in their brief service opened the

country to the preaching of the gospel. It is not easy for us of today to realize that Narcissa Whitman and Mrs. Spalding, young women, were the first white women to cross the Rocky Mountains, this only a bit more than one hundred years ago! We know much of the daily hardships of life at that time in the wilderness of the Northwest through the diary of Mary Walker who with her husband, Elkanah, crossed the Rocky Mountains two years after the others for she "began a diary on January 1, 1833, and kept it with more or less regularity until 1890"—for fifty-seven years. In it she wrote, "Should my life be spared, I may have the opportunity of comparing myself with myself" — a discriminating comment for the young woman of 1833! She must have been an unusual woman for she records that she had "spent part of the day writing a Constitution for a maternal Association." In the midst of Indian uprisings Mary Walker was reaching out to help the few white women who had come with their families to build homes in the far Northwest.

Courageous and magnificent women were those many who, with their husbands and families, braved the perils of the wilderness—perils from Indians, starvation, accident—to carry the word of God to peoples isolated and neglected, but let us not forget the women at home who organized, worked, and gave for the cause of missions at a time when new trails both physical and mental had to be broken, and when even the woman of well-to-do households was practically penniless as the law allowed her no financial rights.

We have invited a representative woman of that time to tell us how one woman gave for missions: born in 1773, she lived until 1865, and served her Master and her church throughout her life—Mrs. Sartell Prentice.

EPISODE III

MRS. SARTELL PRENTICE SPEAKING

(*Arranged from her Diary*)

The curtain discloses a living room of the decade before the Civil War. On the table are piled a number of silk quilts.

(*Starting out a bit hesitatingly, and deprecatingly, but gathering confidence as she goes on.*)

I am finding it very pleasant to meet with you women of today and am glad to try to tell you how we women of a hundred years ago secured money so we could send consecrated men—and brave and consecrated women too—to teach the heathen of God and of Christ's saving power. I have always been busy at home, so have not been able to do as much as I wished to do, but one can only use the simple talents her Heavenly Father has given her.

I was married when I was twenty-one years old and six of my seven children were born in our home at Alstead, New Hampshire, where until 1816 I lived most happily among my friends and neighbors. When in that year, Mr. Prentice felt that it was best for us to move to Canton in Northern New York, I almost felt it was such an undertaking as I could not endure. It was not only that I should have to leave my friends with so little hope of ever seeing them again, but all our household goods and our cattle as well had to be taken on this hazardous trip of at least two hundred miles, and it seemed almost too much to do. Then the roads were only trails and they were over the mountains of Vermont, and those of New York State, and to be crossed was the great Lake Champlain of which the children were affrighted, crying and clinging to me. But we crost in safety. I think it a comfort that God's presence is confined to no place.

We started on our trip in late October and were glad of the shelter of our covered wagon for soon there was snow and much mud so that we could not walk and the little children especially needed the shelter from the cold. Fan rode in a little chair all the way as she was quite unwell. Delays by broken harness, and troubles with wagons often kept us on the road late at night but my greatest anxiety was for the boys who were helping to drive the cattle and who were sometimes way ahead of us and sometimes behind us so that we might not see them for two or three days. There were, too, perils from wandering Indian tribes as well as from evil white men, so the forests were gloomy even in the day time.

We were fortunate that each night we came to a house where we could have some shelter and sometimes some hot food; one night I lay on the floor in my clothes; the house was so full I had as good undressed in a meeting house, but as the poor boys had to sleep on the floor every night I would not murmur. The last part of that journey was the worst as it rained much and as there were a number of accidents to the wagons. So I was very thankful to our Heavenly Father when we were through the woods which it seemed at one time we could never do. But we at last reached our new home at Canton where we spent many happy years and brought up our children among people of piety and culture. I kept thinking all the way that unless the roads should some day be better I did not want any of my friends from Alstead to try to come to see me as there are so many perils and it is all so wearisome.

With my dear husband and seven children to sew and knit for, and with a large household always to care for, it exercised me much that I could do so little for my church and my God, but as the years went by and the children grew and some married and left the home I found that I could serve in other ways. I seemed most to desire to found Sunday Schools in places where there was no religious instruction so I searched for ways to make this possible. I had to use my simple talents and decided to make silk quilts and to sell them. I asked my friends for pieces and made the quilts and was so blest with health that I have got $223.00 into the Missionary Society by silk pieces. I have brought with me, as you see, some of my quilts that I have borrowed from the members of the family who bought them, for I thought you might like to see one of the means by which idle moments may be turned to God's service. (*Picks up quilts one by one as she speaks.*)

This one I made while I lived in Canton and it now belongs to Mary Candace Prentice.

This one I made for Ezra, and this for Mrs. Packer; this one I made for little Willie at his own request.

This one belongs to Dr. Sprague and this I made for a young widow of a poor minister left with her babe.

I could not always choose the colors I would like for my friends gave me the pieces of their own dresses, but I cannot help feeling sure that the Sunday Schools they helped to start radiate beauty wherever they are.

I had a very happy time making these quilts and as I sewed I committed chapter after chapter from the Good Book to memory and also many of Watts' hymns.

I am often asked how many quilts I have made. I am not quite sure but I think it was about seventy as I usually received about $3.00 for a completed quilt, with interlining and either quilted or tufted. I have always had joy in the service and greater joy in the thought of the Sunday Schools that I could help to start. It rejoices me beyond words that more and more Christian women are serving in so many ways and in so many places to bring people to Christ.

THE STORY

Narrator: Mrs. Prentice lived to see great advances made by women of the United States: we do not know how many of the new organizations she touched, but we can feel sure that as a Christian woman of keen intelligence she knew of their formation and sympathized with their activities.

In the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century, which was destined to be known as the Women's Century, a group of remarkable women appeared both in the United States and in England—women such as Margaret Fuller of New England, unquestionably erratic but also unquestionably brilliant; Harriet Martineau of England, and Lucretia Fry, that venturesome Quakeress who began prison reform in England by going among the horrors of Newgate to mitigate the situation of women and children who were there.

The abolition of slavery in the whole world was concerning the minds of both men and women, and in 1840 eight courageous American women sailed to attend an anti-slavery convention in London. They found, however, that the slavery of men to custom and inherited inhibitions continued to operate and they were refused seats on the floor of the Convention, solely on the ground of their sex.

On their return, the reports they made found, among the leaders of the then appearing Woman Suffrage Group, sympathy and much indignation which culminated in 1848 in a Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, under the leadership of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. At this Convention, after quoting the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, a formal statement set forth a list of eighteen *Grievances,* political, educational, legal, and marital, under which women suffered in a land that boasted of its democracy, and in which it was further stated that "man allows her in church as well as in state but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church. He has usurped the prerogatives of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action when that belongs to her conscience and her god."

In 1859 the first class of women to receive a B.A. degree on the completion of four years of accredited scholastic work was graduated at Elmira College: in that same year of 1859, we find the first Woman's Club that had a written Constitution recorded as founded at New Harmony, Indiana: the Woman's Christian Temperance Union established its first chapter in 1873.

One could not say with authority how great was the connection between happenings such as those cited and the rapid growth of women's organizations in the Church, but there is plausibility in a theory that women were being mightily stirred toward activities outside of the home and toward more active participation in affairs of their communities and states.

During the Civil War women of the United States, both North and South, had been forced to take on new responsibilities, to go out from homes, and to deal with community undertakings as they had not done before: the knowledge thus gained of conditions and also of their own ability to deal with new problems doubtless made them the more ready to advance the cause that had for years been close to their hearts. In the church group there developed a tendency for one

local group to consult with a neighboring local as to methods, objectives, etc., a tendency that naturally culminated in a Presbyterian form of union, the word feminized to distinguish it from the ecclesiastical body known as a presbytery, the unit of authority in the denomination: the women began to form presbyterial societies. It is hardly possible to allocate the credit of having been the first of such groups to any particular area as the technical name was not always used, but early in the 1870's—after the confusion of the Civil War had somewhat cleared—there was a quick response to the suggestion of a woman's organization paralleling in area that of the presbytery and of the synod.

Gifts to the church during the Civil War "increased more than 65% and soon after the close of the war the General Assembly established at Pittsburgh a Freedman's Board with responsibility for sending ministers and teachers into the South to help the ex-slaves." This large and most needy field stimulated interest anew and opened to the women's organizations new channels of interest and benevolence.

The trend toward sectional and national organization was also widespread among the women of other denominations than Presbyterian and the years 1870-1880 might be called the Church Woman's Decade, so great was the activity and so many were the national and sectional organizations that came into being.

Within the Presbyterian Church the organization of the first central body of women was in 1870 when women of Philadelphia and vicinity, after much discussion and the facing of some definite opposition, organized *The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.*

EPISODE IV

THE WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH*

SCENE: The lecture room of the Calvary Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pa.
TIME: May 6, 1870.

Characters: (actual names)

MRS. WILLIAM PURVES, Chairman
MRS. H. D. GREGORY, Secretary
MRS. R. H. ALLEN
MRS. J. ADDISON HENRY
MRS. JAMES BAYARD
MRS. R. S. AGNEW
MRS. R. S. FULLERTON
MRS. F. M. HUMPHREY
MRS. STEPHEN W. DANA
MRS. LENOX HODGE
MRS. MATTHEW NEWKIRK
MRS. S. C. PERKINS

A few other women.

REV. DR. WILLIAM SPEER, tall, middle-aged man, pastor of church.
(NOTE: *If a clergyman cannot be secured for the part of Dr. Speer, the reading of a letter may be substituted.*)

A JANITOR, middle-aged man.
Three assistants to janitor, young men or 'teen-age boys.

Costumes: Women, spring costume of 1870—a mixture of colors.
Minister, ministerial costume of the period.
Janitor and assistants, no coats, rough clothes.

ENTER the janitor and an assistant, carrying between them a small table of the 1870 type, about three or four feet long, which they place stage center, with a chair behind it.

At the same time that the table is carried in, ENTER, stage left, two more assistants carrying chairs, which they place very quickly and rather noisily upon the stage, and depart on a run for others.

JANITOR (*mopping his face and addressing assistant*): Well, Jim, we got to do some hustling ef we git this here room ready for them ladies in ten minutes!

JIM: There's all them chairs stored in the Infant room.

JANITOR: We'll git em! (*They go quickly out stage right and come back with as many chairs as they can grasp in each hand.*) Hey, there (*to the boys who are placing the chairs on the other side of the stage*), you ain't fixin' them chairs right. Them ladies is pertic'ler. They wants them chairs fixed in a circle-like. Now you bring 'em in as fast as you kin and I'll fix 'em. Jim, I ain't going to stand this much longer. Ef I've got to keep a fixin' chairs about every other minute fer ladies' meetin's, I'm either goin' to leave or ask for more pay!

JIM: The Reverend Doctor's coming this afternoon. Asked me what time the meetin' wuz to be.

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* Adapted from Episode I in *The Lifted Cross,* Historical Pageant, by Anita B. Ferris.

FIRST BOY: He's goin' to keep his eyes on them ladies! (*Low laughter from all except janitor.*)

JANITOR (*severely*): Well, I guess he'll hev ter, with all these "official meetin's"! Now, boys, you kin clar out. But there's no tellin'! I may need yer in a half hour for another "official meetin" of them ladies. (*Limps out stage right after Jim, grumbling as he goes.*) I ain't goin' ter stand the work in this here church. (*All out.*)
(*Brief pause: women ENTER in groups of three and four. They shake hands and talk together, until all are in.*)

MRS. PURVES (*rapping lightly on the table*): Will the meeting please come to order? (*All become silent.*) Shall we bow our heads for a moment in silent prayer to ask for divine blessing upon the great task which we have come together to consider? (*All bow their heads.*) Whom will you have to act as Chairman?

MRS. FULLERTON: Mrs. Purves, will you please continue to act as Chairman?

ALL: Mrs. Purves!

MRS. PURVES (*bowing slightly*): Thank you. Mrs. Gregory, will you be kind enough to act as Secretary? (*Mrs. Gregory takes her place behind the table.*) Ladies, I cannot tell you how glad I am to see so many of you here this afternoon and to know that you are all animated by a keen spirit of service. I am sure that we are all conscious that this is a most momentous occasion for Presbyterian women and that we desire to bring our best thought to the matter that has brought us together. Likewise, we must be most careful that we are not actuated by any ambition for our sex but desire to be used as best we may be to further God's plans for the up-building of His Kingdom. We are certainly living in most stirring days and the world is open before Christian peoples as it never has been before, and as we look abroad upon the earth we can but exclaim, "Behold, what God hath wrought!"
Ladies, we are here to consider as to whether on this 6th day of May, 1870, we should take steps to form a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church.

MRS. HUMPHREY: Some of us have been working through the Women's Union Missionary Society, of which Mrs. Doremus is chairman: would we withdraw from that if as Presbyterians we formed this proposed Presbyterian Society? And if so, may I ask why that seems best?

MRS. PURVES: Mrs. Humphrey has asked a very wise question and we are most glad to try to answer it. No one of us, I am sure, has any question as to the fine work that is being done through the Union Missionary Society, and those who desire to keep such affiliation will, of course, be at full liberty to do so, but it has come to be that, as new missionary societies are formed in our Presbyterian churches, they are seeming to need a Presbyterian organization that will be their headquarters and will bind them together.

MRS. DANA: Just what would a headquarters organization do, Madam Chairman?

MRS. PURVES: It would, I think, be a center of information for the women's societies, as the general Board of Foreign Missions is for the churches, would prepare literature for them, etc.

MRS. FULLERTON: Yes, and it would be a source of great inspiration to the women, would it not, if they were bound together in one overhead society and were all working for the same things?

MRS. ALLEN: And could meet together occasionally to hear about the progress of the work?

MRS. HUMPHREY: I do see that it would be an inspiration that would draw the women together and that would stimulate them to greater endeavor.

MRS. HODGE: Could we not do all this through our Board of Foreign Missions?

MRS. PURVES: Yes, dear Mrs. Hodge, we could in a way, but now the doors of the Oriental home, fast closed so long to all missionary effort, because proffered by *men,* have marvelously opened to us; to us, because we are *women!* To the *woman* teacher; to the *woman* doctor; to the *woman* friend. Women of Japan, Africa, India, Persia, China, Syria stretch forth their hands to us! How can we look upon the pictures of paganism photographed by the missionary except through our tears? How must our souls be stirred to their depths when we feel that woman's hand *alone* can lead our down-trodden heathen sisters up to light and life! The woman of today bears a responsibility proportionate to the grandeur of the times. Her work is world-wide. Will she prove herself equal to it?
(*Enter the Reverend Dr. Speer, pastor, who seats himself in the rear.*)

MRS. DANA (*rising*): Madam Chairman.

MRS. PURVES: Mrs. Dana.

MRS. DANA: You say that *we* must answer the call of the women and children in these lands. Are they then *neglected* by our Board?

MRS. FULLERTON (*springing to her feet*): Madam Chairman, may I answer that question?

MRS. PURVES: Mrs. Fullerton.

MRS. FULLERTON: It is not that the work among women and children is neglected by our Board, but that if conducted by an organization of women it will awaken the sympathies and develop the energies of many other women who are now doing nothing, and the funds thus collected will be applied by the Board of our Church to those objects for which it is given.

MRS. ALLEN: Madam Chairman, would there be a woman secretary at head-quarters and how could the expenses be paid?

MRS. PURVES: Yes, a woman secretary would be needed and expenses would have to be paid out of the gifts sent in by the local societies, just a bit from each, but that expense we think would be more than met by the greater number of gifts that would be received.

MRS. HUMPHREY: If only more women had money of their own to give I know the gifts would flow in when appeals were made for suffering women and children.

MRS. PURVES: Often we shall have to do with less ourselves to help care for others.

MRS. PERKINS: More unmarried women must be sent out to do work solely for women and their children, and it is most eminently fitting that we as women

should shoulder this new responsibility. We are individuals before the Lord. Can we rest upon the efforts of the men to raise our own sex?

MRS. HENRY: Madam Chairman, (*Mrs. Purves inclines her head.*) I think I am speaking for all when I say that we agree with our *whole hearts* to Mrs. Fullerton's plea and to that of Mrs. Perkins, but are we not a little premature in holding this meeting now? Our Board of Foreign Missions is about to reorganize, combining the Old and New Schools. It might be difficult for them to consider our plans of organization now. We wish to solicit their most favorable attention. In other words, we must be tactful in presenting our plans, since we are suggesting something new and untried by our Board. I move that we adjourn until after the reorganization of the Foreign Board.

MANY VOICES (*speaking simultaneously*): No!

MRS. ALLEN: Perhaps while changes are being considered may be the best time for us to offer our plan.

MRS. PERKINS (*springing up*): Madam Chairman, I move that we proceed to organize *now!*

MRS. FULLERTON *and* MRS. BAYARD (*simultaneously*): I second the motion.

MRS. PURVES: There is a motion already before the meeting, namely that we adjourn until after the reorganization of our Foreign Board. Is there any discussion?

MRS. PERKINS (*rising*): Madam Chairman.

MRS. PURVES: Mrs. Perkins.

MRS. PERKINS: All last winter Miss Brittan of the Union Missionary Society addressed small groups of women in our city about the many needs in the foreign fields. It was borne in upon us that as Presbyterians, organized as such, we could accomplish more than in the Union Society by drawing more women to the cause. *We have canvassed all winter. We know the feeling of our women.* We have the approval of Dr. Irving, the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions. He has met with us and talked with us. The iron is hot! We are here today for the avowed purpose of organizing. Shall we not strike now and trust that Providence will incline the hearts of the men to accept our plan?

MRS. HENRY (*without rising*): I withdraw my motion.

MRS. PURVES: Certainly we shall not go forward, Mrs. Henry, without submitting our plans fully to the Board and receiving their unreserved approval. This is very necessary. A second motion has been made and seconded that we organize at *once.* All in favor say "Aye."

ALL (*with vigor*): Aye!

MRS. PURVES: Contrary? It is a vote.

DR. SPEER (*rising with dignity*): Madam Chairman.

MRS. PURVES: Dr. Speer.

DR. SPEER: And ladies! May a visitor say a few words? (*Mrs. Purves bows.*) Please do not record my remarks in your minutes. I wish to speak simply

as the pastor of a number of you. After listening to your very interesting discussion, indeed, I did not know that ladies were such parliamentarians, I have wondered if you had perhaps considered this subject of organization in all its aspects. Ahem. Will you not be rather diminishing the annual collections for Foreign Missions, since there is naturally but one purse for a family? Are you not taking from the family contribution to give simply through another set of machinery which must carry with it an added expense for maintenance? At best, would it not be contributing the same sum through different channels? The agency already at work is equipped and trained. I am but expressing the views of many pastors and some members of our Board. We are praying that Providence will guide your judgment in the consideration of this new enterprise. I thank you for your kind attention.

MRS. PURVES: We thank you, Dr. Speer, for your suggestions, and will consider them. (*There is absolute silence until the minister has quite withdrawn, and for a second or two afterwards, as the Chairman gazes at the women.*)

MRS. FULLERTON (*rising slowly but with decision*): Madam Chairman.

MRS. PURVES: Mrs. Fullerton.

MRS. FULLERTON: I move that we proceed to *draft a constitution for the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church,* and that the Chair appoint a committee *immediately* for such a purpose!

MRS. BAYARD *and* MRS. NEWKIRK (*together*): I second the motion!

MRS. PURVES: You have heard the motion that we draft a constitution. All in favor signify it by the uplifted hand.

ALL (*raising their hands*): Aye!

MRS. PURVES: How many members should there be on the committee to prepare a Constitution? Would five be enough?
(*All nod affirmatively*)

MRS. ALLEN: Mrs. Purves to be the chairman.

MRS. PURVES: May I then appoint Mrs. Fullerton, Mrs. Hodge, Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Henry, and will these ladies please come to my house at 2:30 o'clock a week from today?

MRS. NEWKIRK (*in a ringing voice as the curtain falls*): And let it be ready in time to present to the General Assembly the latter part of this month.

(*Curtain*)

THE STORY

Narrator: It is not always easy to differentiate cause and effect in the search of early records but it seems fair to designate the Board formed in 1870 at Philadelphia as *Cause,* for the years following its organization saw a swift response in the formation of presbyterial and synodical societies throughout the country, as well as the formation of other Boards.

It would be interesting to list the presbyterial and synodical societies in the order of their formation, but when one finds that the Colorado Synodical Society originally included New Mexico, Montana, and Wyoming; that while Wisconsin was the first state to be organized synodically, Tennessee was the first to bear the name "Synodical" when organized; that the first grouping of local societies in California was under the Occidental Board in 1873; and that Indiana and New Jersey are the only synodical societies that today have the same boundaries and include the same presbyterial societies as they had when they organized, one sees what a bewildering mosaic would be formed by details.

Like Topsy, societies "just grew": sometimes the synodical society preceded the presbyterial, sometimes the latter were well organized and running, awaiting the development of a synodical society to pull them together. Some of both were organized for home and foreign work, some for one or the other: again the distinctive issues are complicated as the Occidental Board secured funds for work in Persia and supported the Chinese work in San Francisco, which was not transferred to the Woman's Board of Home Missions until 1922.

In 1873, too, the women of Colorado asked the General Assembly to organize a national woman's organization: courageous ideas were coming to the surface but one cannot but note the seemingly sporadic appearance of new organizations springing up in the less thickly settled areas of the country. In 1942 all is so neat and orderly in the sweep of Presbyterian women's organizations that one wonders how information reached those early groups, how they found one another and how they found it possible to reach synodical and presbyterial meetings—even in 1914 it is recorded that two delegates to a synodical meeting in Kentucky "had to travel thirty-six hours by carriage, water, and three railroad systems," but it is also reported that in that same year that synodical society "stood at the head of all synodicals in greatest proportionate increase in gifts." In South Dakota annals it is recorded that on one occasion the president traveled 1428 miles to reach a meeting.

In the eighties there was in one area "some doubt of the need or propriety of the women doing their own talking"; quite evidently the matter was not easily settled, for in the 90's a debate between men and women was staged on "Resolved: that there is danger the women's organizations will grow into an independency." Synod debated the affirmative, the synodical society the negative. As Kansas Synodical Society continues to the present day we may assume the decision on the debate!

Still the way was not always easy for the women: in 1876 a presbytery and a presbyterial society met at the same place in a church having but one room. The meeting of the presbytery was adjourned that the women might meet. "Most of

the men, fearing that the women might disgrace themselves, took seats near the door in case their fears were realized." On the other hand, the men of the synod and the presbytery were frequently the ones who encouraged the women to organize and occasionally really pushed them into service. When one synod decided that a woman's church organization "could be little more than a fifth wheel," the women demurely established Ladies' Aid Societies defining them as "sort of caretakers for the church." "Women," said one of them, "have never been averse to changing their names and the church missionary society is every whit a woman."

Utah Synodical Society grew out of a "Society of Missionary Inquiry" organized by the wives of ministers and the women teachers in the mission schools lest "in their absorption in their own immediate home mission work they forget the world missionary outlook" and the women of South Dakota rejoiced that "a band of Christian Indian women" sat with them at their meetings.

And so the record goes on—women largely without specific training in parliamentary law or in methods but with hearts attuned to service and with invincible belief in the power of prayer moved steadily onward, the pattern of service being constantly more nearly perfected, spreading to more and more lands beyond the seas, and blossoming into schools and hospitals, into special service for the neglected women and children of the Far East and of other areas, and aiding in the upbuilding of the Church of Christ in the home lands and in other lands.

Meanwhile the Board organized at Philadelphia in 1870 had become a center of inspiration for the societies within that territory; it prepared programs and leaflets and transmitted the gifts from the women's societies to the Board of Foreign Missions. The inspiration of such a body was epoch-making and to meet the needs of other areas of the country six additional Women's Boards of Foreign Missions were organized, each having a definite assignment of territory in which to serve.

In Chicago there had been since 1868 a Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, composed of both Presbyterian and Congregational women, but on December 15, 1870, the former withdrew from this group, forming a Presbyterian Board of the Northwest, auxiliary to the Board of Foreign Missions, with headquarters in Chicago.

In 1871 a small Board, which later was named the Woman's Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Society of Northern New York, was organized, but later it was consolidated with the New York Board which also had been organized in 1870.

In 1873 an Occidental Board was organized at San Francisco; in 1877 the Board of the Southwest came into being at St. Louis, and in 1888 the North Pacific Board at Portland, Oregon, completed the territorial distribution of responsibility.

Thus were established seven regional Women's Boards of Foreign Missions, although to some degree, as has been noted, lines between Home and Foreign work were in the early days not always clearly delimited, and an overlapping of responsibility continued in some areas for a number of years.

However, the organization in 1878 of a national Woman's Executive Com-

mittee for Home Missions, auxiliary to the Board of Home Missions had a tendency toward clarification of areas of responsibility. If credit for the organization of this body is to be allocated, it should be divided between the wife of an officer in the United States army and Dr. Sheldon Jackson, field executive for the Board of Home Missions in the Rocky Mountain Area. The former, having accompanied her husband to the almost unknown outpost at Santa Fé, New Mexico, in 1867, wrote home to her mother in Auburn, New York, asking if the women of the churches there could not send help to the Spanish-speaking people who had perforce become residents of the United States through the changed boundary lines made at the close of the Mexican War, when a vast area in the Southwest was ceded by Mexico to the United States.

The response to this appeal was the almost immediate formation of the Santa Fé Association of Auburn, New York, which at once sent a missionary to Santa Fé to serve as teacher to the Spanish-speaking children whose ignorance had so touched the heart of the young wife. Charity Anna Gaston, the young missionary who answered the call, made the trip to St. Louis by train but there left the railroad for the stage coach, going into Santa Fé twelve years ahead of the railroad. It could not have been an easy trip, her companion travelers were often men who, by going into a newly-occupied territory, hoped to escape the penalties of their misdeeds in more settled communities. Charity Anna escaped all dangers that might so easily have frustrated her and opened the small school that was the forerunner of the Allison-James School still serving young people from Spanish-American homes. It is pleasant to know that sixty years later a new building there was named Gaston Hall in memory of the intrepid woman who began the work.

The Santa Fé Association strengthened itself by becoming auxiliary to the famous Union Missionary Society, formed in 1861 under the inspiring leadership of Mrs. Thomas C. Doremus of New York. A year later, for some reason now unknown, the Presbyterian women withdrew and founded the New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado Missionary Society, auxiliary to both the Home and Foreign Mission Boards of their own denomination.

In 1870 it again changed its name to Ladies Board of Missions, continuing departments of both home and foreign missions.

There was ever-increasing interest among the church women and desire to "do something about" the situation in the world and in our own land, but no pattern had yet been made that was of sufficient scope to enlist the interest of the women of all the churches. Boards were denominational and interdenominational; new ones were formed for either home or foreign missions or for both: confusion made work at various headquarters difficult and sometimes caused uncertainty in the mission field itself. But as communication became more simplified and greater understanding was developed, one sees the foreshadowing of national women's organizations and also of greater unity of service between men and women.

At this time the General Assembly and the Board of Home Missions frankly faced the fact that the increased territorial area of the West had brought under the flag those whose backgrounds were neither Christian nor English-speaking:

missionaries could not preach to them, foundation work needed to be done among them. But "the native population does not welcome us, and many are hostile to us." How, asked the Assembly and the Board, shall the needs of these people be met?

Among the Chinese of the Coast the Foreign Board was doing work, especially among the youth; Charity Anna Gaston had found a type of service at Santa Fé among non-English-speaking people that was proving itself adaptable: noting these beginnings a "new agency," says the General Assembly, "precisely such as it is necessary to employ in foreign lands, must be employed here. Not that the preaching of the Gospel is to be superseded or made subordinate to anything else, but schools must be established, as auxiliary and preparatory to the preaching of the Gospel." The "field" for service, as indicated by the General Assembly to be in Alaska, Utah and New Mexico, among "the large Indian population of Arizona, in Washington Territory, in Oregon, Idaho, Nevada and Montana."

Let us join a group of women meeting in a small, dusty room, generally used for storage, on the first floor of 23 Centre Street, New York City, headquarters of the Board of Home Missions, on December 12, 1878, that we may see some of the changes that are coming.

EPISODE V

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE WOMAN'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE*

SCENE: A small, dusty room at 23 Centre Street, New York City.
TIME: December 12, 1878.

Characters:

MRS. S. F. SCOVEL, Chairman, Synod of Pittsburgh, Presbytery of Pittsburgh
MRS. O. E. BOYD, Secretary, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth
MRS. WM. M. JOHNSON, Synod of Albany, Presbytery of Troy
MRS. M. C. ARMSTRONG, Synod of Central New York, Presbytery of Syracuse
MRS. W. P. PRENTICE, Synod of Cincinnati
MRS. R. T. HAINES, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth
MRS. W. C. ROBERTS, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth
MRS. C. H. LANGDON, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth
MRS. ASHBEL GREEN, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Jersey City
MRS. J. D. BEDLE, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Jersey City
MRS. ROBERT AIKMAN, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Morris & Orange
MISS J. H. NICHOLS, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Newark
MRS. M. GREGORY, Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Newton
MRS. G. L. GRAHAM, Synod of New York, Presbytery of New York
MRS. R. R. BOOTH, Synod of New York, Presbytery of New York
MRS. J. I. BROUNSON, Synod of Pittsburgh, Presbytery of Pittsburgh

Costumes: of Winter of 1878.

MRS. SCOVEL: We are most grateful to Mrs. Green for the very helpful and uplifting opening service in which she has made us realize the solemnity of this occasion and our need of full dependence on God that we may be guided to wise decisions on this momentous day. I will ask our Secretary, Mrs. Boyd, to call the roll of the members of this committee.

MRS. BOYD: (*Calls roll—as above—each member responding.*)

MRS. SCOVEL: As you were not all present at the meeting in Pittsburgh during the time of the General Assembly last May when an action was taken that much concerns us, I have asked Mrs. R. T. Haines to present to us a statement of those actions that have preceded our gathering here today.

MRS. HAINES: I have written out the statement that I was asked to make, for it has seemed to me that such momentous affairs were in the making that it is necessary that there be the greatest accuracy in any reports that are made. (*Reads*) I think all of you who are here know that is has seemed wise to many women in the church, and also to some of the men leaders, that there should be organized a *national* woman's Committee of Home Missions, following the example of the women who have organized a number of regional Boards for Foreign Missions. You also know that some of the home mission work of women's societies has been done through the interdenominational Ladies Board of Missions while some has been done directly through

* Episode based on the minutes of the organizational meeting.

the Board of Home Missions. There has been real confusion and, so by the advice of Dr. Sheldon Jackson and other men, a small convention of Presbyterian women was held at Pittsburgh in May to discuss this matter.

MRS. LANGDON: Were all the women from Pittsburgh?

MRS. SCOVELL: Oh, no, they came from as far as Chicago and Indiana and Ohio. I wish some from the far West could have been with us. (*Nods to* MRS. HAINES *to continue.*)

MRS. HAINES: There was much discussion after which the following Resolution was unanimously adopted:

"That a Committee of ladies be appointed, from various parts of the country to confer with the Ladies' Board of Home Missions, New York, as to the propriety of that Board devoting itself exclusively to Home Missions (as there are special Boards for Foreign Missions), and should the New York Board fail to comply with the overture of the Committee, it shall be empowered to call a meeting of delegates from the different churches, at a suitable time and place, to organize a new Board."

(*Expressions of concern by members.* MRS. HAINES *pauses.*)

MRS. SCOVEL: I think we should hear all of Mrs. Haines' report before we discuss this matter.

MRS. HAINES: The overture was sent as directed to the Ladies' Board of Missions and on July 11 the two committees met to discuss the matter: There were presented letters of opinion from absent members and also personal letters from societies urging the Ladies' Board to accept the proposition of the committee, *but* (*Pauses dramatically*)

MRS. AIKMAN: Surely the proposal was not refused—

MRS. PRENTICE: Oh, it could not be.

MRS. BOOTH: Please let us hear what more Mrs. Haines has to tell us. It is hard to bear the strain.

MRS. SCOVEL: Mrs. Haines, will you please continue?

MRS. HAINES (*reading*): The reply of the Ladies' Board, which had been adopted they said after a "full, earnest and prayerful discussion of the important question" was "that the ladies of the Pittsburgh Committee be lovingly and cordially invited to come in and work with us as they can do most efficiently in our Home Department by forming branches in the States not now connected with us." (*An appalled silence*)

MRS. ROBERTS: You mean that the Ladies' Board of Missions *refuses* the plan made at the Pittsburgh Convention?

MRS. SCOVEL: I am afraid that that is what they do mean, Mrs. Roberts. I am sure we see their position, too.

MRS. GREEN: Do you think that they fully understand the relation that we must sustain to the Board of Home Missions, that we could hardly carry on the work we hope to do apart from it?

MRS. HAINES: That was explained and I think was understood, but you see they do wish to continue as a Board doing foreign mission work as well as home and now that there are six Women's Boards of Foreign Missions affiliated with the Board of Foreign Missions the plan seems to be too complicated.

MRS. BEDLE: I wonder if they fully see that the plan they propose would be for synodical and presbyterial societies to become a part of a Board that would not have—or at least has not now—any relation with our historical Board of Home Missions with which we are naturally to be associated?

MRS. JOHNSON: I am not sure of that—of their thought in this—but their decision leaves us in a strange dilemma.

MRS. PRENTICE: What can we do now? I am confused.

MRS. SCOVEL: The second part of the overture prepared at Pittsburgh said—Mrs. Haines, will you be good enough to read again the second part of the Overture?

MRS. HAINES (*reads*): "Should the Ladies' Board of Missions fail to accede to the Overture of the Committee, it shall be empowered to call a meeting of delegates from the different churches to organize a new Board."

MRS. SCOVEL: And we are meeting today to carry out that wish! I have talked with some of the gentlemen of the Board of Home Missions who say that we have no choice in this matter as the instructions come from the Pittsburgh Convention.

MRS. LANGDON: I would not have you think that I am unwilling but I cannot tell you how it grieves me to turn from the dear friends in the Ladies' Board.

MRS. BOYD: We all feel so I am sure—but what can we do?

MRS. SCOVEL: It is near the noon hour. I wonder if we could have a small Committee on Plans of Work and Regulations who would later in the day bring us some recommendations as to the next steps?

MRS. AIKMAN: That would be a very good plan I think, Mrs. Scovel.

MISS NICHOLS: And as Dr. Paxton is to address us at one o'clock it might be that the ladies could have a little more time to work than just through the lunch time.

MRS. BROUNSON: But would they not wish to hear Dr. Paxton?

ALL: Indeed we all would.

MRS. GREGORY: But some must work! For we do not know when again the ladies from a distance can be with us and so many states are waiting to know what is being done here today that we can hardly postpone some action.

MRS. SCOVEL: Who shall compose this committee to form a Plan?

MRS. BOOTH: Would not Mrs. Scovel name these ladies?

MRS. GRAHAM: That would be best—yes, certainly.

MRS. SCOVEL: May I think for a few moments of this—(*as she puts her hand over her eyes the women talk quietly*)—I would like to ask Mrs. Bedle, Mrs. Haines, Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Roberts, and Mrs. Johnson to do this for us.
(*Sounds of consternation from the appointed women.*)
I think it would be well if you would allow me to name a Nominating Committee during the noon hour. Will they please meet at once and shall we all be back here promptly at one o'clock?
(*The women go out talking.*)

Second Scene

(When the curtain goes up the ladies are returning.)

Mrs. Scovel: Who will report for the committee?

Mrs. Johnson: We have named Mrs. Bedle as chairman and she will report.

Mrs. Scovel: Mrs. Bedle, will you please come forward?

Mrs. Bedle: Madam Chairman, and ladies, the committee has asked me to say that we have done the best we could in so short a time and submit the following for your consideration. (*Reads*):
Plan of Work:

1. This Committee shall be called the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church.
   (Subject to consultation with the Board.)
2. It shall co-operate with the Board of Home Missions and shall undertake no work without its approval.
3. Its object shall be to diffuse information, to unify, stimulate and superintend the work of women throughout the Church for Home Missions, including the raising of money for Teachers' salaries, the distribution of "boxes," and aiding such other objects as may be suggested or approved by the Board of Home Missions.
4. It shall serve as an organ of communication between the Synodical Committees and the Board of Home Missions. The work in detail shall be carried on under the advice or sanction of the Pastors and Sessions, the Presbyteries, Synods and the General Assembly.
5. The Presidents and Secretaries of the Synodical Committees shall constitute this Woman's Executive Committee, together with such additional local members, taken from the Synodical Committees, as may be necessary to carry on the work.
6. Its officers shall be a President, four Vice-Presidents, two or more Corresponding Secretaries, a Recording Secretary and a Treasurer, all annually elected, with duties as usually understood. (The Committee recommends that the Board be consulted in regard to a Treasurer.)
7. The Secretaries shall keep up constant correspondence with the members of the Committee in every part of the United States who shall send a report to Headquarters at least every three months.
8. The Headquarters shall be in New York City.
9. An annual meeting of the Committee shall be held at which time the election of officers and of local members shall take place. Vacancies can be filled *pro tem* during the interim at any regularly called meeting at Headquarters.
10. No change can be made in this Plan of Work, except by a two-third vote of those present at the annual meeting.

(Mrs. Bedle *pauses.*)

Mrs. Scovel: Do you wish to consider each item separately?

Mrs. Langdon: Can we not vote on this paper all at once?

Mrs. Scovel: It is as you wish.

Mrs. Green: I move that we do so.

MRS. GRAHAM: I second the motion.

MRS. SCOVEL: Do any of you wish to ask questions?

MRS. BOOTH: The committee has done such good work that it seems to me we might accept their recommendations and work under them for a year at least—then we shall know better what we need.

MRS. BOYD: I agree with Mrs. Booth. I do not think we can at this time improve the recommendations.

MRS. SCOVEL: Will you vote? (*Nods and "Yeses"*) All in favor of the adoption of this Plan of Work will please rise—this is so important! (*All rise.*)

MRS. SCOVEL: The motion is carried unanimously. Mrs. Bedle, has your committee anything further to say?

MRS. BEDLE: Yes, Madam Chairman, the committee also prepared some Regulations, and if it be your wish I will present them.

MRS. SCOVEL: Please do, Mrs. Bedle.

MRS. BEDLE (*Reads*): Regulations:

1. Every meeting shall be opened with reading the Bible and prayer.
2. The Committee shall meet once a month from Oct. 1st to May 31st; and also upon call of the President.
3. Three shall constitute a quorum.
4. An Annual Report shall be made to the Board of Home Missions every March.
5. Every member shall be invited to pray for the cause of Christ in our land every Sunday morning just before divine service.
6. If sufficient special donations to meet expenses for rent, freight, postage, and stationery be not received, money for these purposes may be taken from the contributions to the General Work.
7. Each Synodical Committee may carry on the work as approved by their Synod.
8. Additions or changes in these Regulations may be made after one month's notice, at any regular meeting of the committee.

MRS. SCOVEL: What do you wish to do about these Regulations?

MRS. ARMSTRONG: I move they be approved.

MRS. PRENTICE: I second the motion.

MRS. SCOVEL: All in favor of this motion please say "Aye." (*All say "Aye."*)

MRS. SCOVEL: Shall we now hear from the Nominating Committee as to the officers they suggest. Mrs. Johnson, will you please report as chairman of that committee?

MRS. JOHNSON: Your committee nominates the following:

Mrs. Ashbel Green, President
Mrs. J. L. Graham, Vice-President
Mrs. J. B. Dunn, Vice-President
Mrs. R. T. Haines, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. A. R. Walsh, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. I. D. Bedle, Recording Secretary

MRS. SCOVEL: What will you do with these nominations?

MISS NICHOLS: I move that the ladies named be elected.

MRS. GRAHAM: I second the motion.

MRS. SCOVEL: Shall we elect these ladies by rising? (*All rise.*) Thank you. We are most fortunate to have as president of the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions one who bears a name so happily known in the Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Green, will you and the other officers come forward that the ladies may be introduced to you?
(*Officers come forward.*)

MRS. SCOVEL: Members, your new officers are: (*Each lady bows as her name is given.*)

Mrs. Ashbel Green of Jersey City Presbytery, New Jersey, President
Mrs. J. L. Graham of New York Presbytery, Vice-President
Mrs. J. B. Dunn, Vice-President
Mrs. R. T. Haines of Elizabeth Presbytery, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. A. R. Walsh, Corresponding Secretary
Mrs. I. D. Bedle of Jersey City Presbytery, Recording Secretary
Mrs. Bedle is the wife of the Governor of New Jersey and we welcome her as such.

MRS. GREEN: Will Mrs. Scovel please continue with the meeting?

MRS. SCOVEL: Should we do any further business before we separate?

MRS. HAINES: Should we not report to the Board of Home Missions that we have organized?

MRS. SCOVEL: I am sure we should. Perhaps Mrs. Green and Mrs. Haines as the president and corresponding secretary will care for this.

MRS. GREEN: Thank you, Mrs. Scovel. We will do so.

MRS. GREGORY: I would like to move that a report of this convention with a copy of the Plan of Work and Regulations be sent for publication to the religious newspapers of the Presbyterian Church.

MRS. ROBERTS: Very good. I second that motion.

MRS. SCOVEL: All in favor say "yes." (*All say "Yes."*)

MRS. GRAHAM: So that the work can be properly furthered I would like to move that where no synodical committees have been appointed this general Executive Committee shall prosecute its work by direct correspondence with individuals and churches.

MRS. AIKMAN: That is so important! I second the motion.

MRS. SCOVEL: All in favor say "Yes." (*Most do—some seem a bit uncertain.*) It is a vote. There seems much that we would wish to do yet this afternoon but this very short day is drawing to a close and I am sure we need to start for our homes.

May I say how grateful I am to our officers who have accepted these great responsibilities and that I shall pray for them that they may be given physical and spiritual strength for this service. And I am grateful to all of you that you have been so patient with my inexperience and so helpful today. Thank you all.

MRS. ROBERTS: And we thank you, Mrs. Scovel, for your direction of us today. We are moving forward into a new day. Let us all pray as we work that the service we offer may be greatly blessed.

MRS. SCOVEL: Thank you, Mrs. Roberts. We are now adjourned.

(*As the curtain closes, the women go forward to speak to* MRS. SCOVEL, MRS. GREEN, *and other officers.*)

THE STORY

Narrator: Thus a national pattern is set! Within a decade seven women's Foreign Boards, each serving an area, were organized and were unified through a Central Committee and through the Board of Foreign Missions. The Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions, national in scope, bore a similar relation to the Board of Home Missions.

Meanwhile women's organizations, local, presbyterial and synodical, have been springing up throughout the country: the women at headquarters, lay women and secretarial staffs with meagre equipment and little experience, are concerned as to how they may serve adequately this great group, how present to them the needs of the mission fields, how stimulate them to intelligent and increased service.

Undaunted by the situation, however, the new agencies, knowing that the "dissemination of religious and missionary intelligence" was a vital need, began at once to prepare leaflets and pamphlets telling of work to be done and also of the pattern of organization that was now set up and to which all were asked to subscribe, that uniformity might help to unify. What sighs of relief such news must have brought! The zeal of Presbyterian women had multiplied organizations with so many types of names and with such varied allegiances that many groups had found it difficult to know to whom they should turn for help. The clear-cut pattern was welcomed from the Atlantic to the Pacific and when women's missionary magazines with their monthly messages from mission fields, with suggested programs for meetings and with information as to material and speakers appeared, harassed officers and chairmen in local societies breathed more freely and with increasing zeal planned meetings, and stimulated attendance. *Women's Work for Women,* appearing first in 1885, as the organ of the Central Committee for Foreign Missions, was followed in 1886 by the issuance of *The Home Mission Monthly,* both of which magazines continued to be published until in 1923, when they were merged under the name, *Women and Missions.* The latter magazine had the unique experience in the thirty-seven years of its existence of having had but two editors—a mother and daughter, Mrs. Delos E. Finks and Miss Theodora Finks.

Until the organization of the Woman's Executive Committee in 1878, the women's societies had sent their gifts to aid missionaries under the Board of Home Missions, sometimes adding a feminine touch by preparing "boxes" for the ministers and their families. "Boxes" had begun to be prepared for the "pious young men" at Princeton Seminary much earlier. By 1844 it is recorded that "the Ladies of the Sewing Society of Fresh Pond, Long Island, sent a missionary box to the Board which reports that it has had other inquiries *re* such and that the Rev. Sylvester Scovel, Secretary for Church Extension, will be able to accept such boxes and distribute them to the families of the missionaries except on some occasions, when it becomes necessary to sell the clothing in New York City and send the money thus obtained to the missionaries as transportation difficulties were insurmountable"! There were few railroads and no transcontinental one until 1867—hence the sales!

In 1876 we find in the *Rocky Mountain Presbyterian* that praise is given for the numerous boxes which are being prepared, but a warning is offered that "there is one way in which these boxes may wound feelings of those who are to receive them, while they yet feel grateful for the help they may receive. This is the practice of putting in cast-off clothing. Our missionaries are men and women of culture and refinement who have cheerfully gone forth to make sacrifices in the mission field. They are entitled to the respect and affectionate consideration of their sisters who are in easier circumstances. Their trials and poverty are often such as can hardly be conceived of by those in old settled churches. . . . Shall we cause them to feel that they are regarded as beggars, as beneficiaries? Surely not!"

In later days not only the missionary's family, but the children in mission schools became the objects of "boxes." Today we talk of "Overseas and National Missions sewing." Our grandmothers and great grandmothers, in their day, plied their needles for the same causes.

In a Board Report of 1849 it is recorded, "It is desirable to encourage the cooperation of the ladies. . . . But it would greatly discourage them in this good work to find that their efforts furnished a pretext or excuse to the male members of the Church to withhold or diminish their offerings"!

At that same period the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* recorded that in Pittsburgh First Presbyterian Church "a *Sewing Society* is connected with the Missionary Society. The object of these united societies is highly laudable and important. There is ground to believe that they will pursue it with zeal and untiring effort, and to hope that, in reliance on the Holy Spirit for success, they will be able to exert an efficient instrumentality in the great enterprise of enlightening and converting the world to God; and of raising the female portion of our race among the heathen from their present degraded and wretched condition to that state of respectability, comfort, and usefulness, which they ought to sustain in the scale of intelligent beings."

As one turns the pages of musty records, one finds the desire for united prayer among Christian women, irrespective of locality: as early as 1812 The Female Society of Boston addressed a letter to "The Female Friends of Zion," saying: "We think it desirable that we should all hold our meetings on the same day, the idea being that if many of our dear sisters in different places were met at the same time and engaged in the same delightful service of praying down blessings on mankind, it would tend to strengthen our faith, animate our strength and cheer our hearts . . . we recommend that you set apart the first Monday afternoon of every month for supplication to God."

It is a long gap from 1812 to 1877 but we like to believe that there had been in this period many "Female Friends of Zion" gathering in groups for prayer on a specified day of the month and that Presbyterian women were among those who prayed. In 1877 the young synodical society of New Jersey resolved "to appoint a day of fasting and prayer in view of the great need of liberality." Ten years later, in 1887, Mrs. Darwin R. James, then president of the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions, called Presbyterian women to observe a Day of Prayer for the homeland: a few years later, following the world

Ecumenical Council held in New York City, a plea was made by Mrs. Henry W. Peabody and Mrs. Helen Barrett Montgomery, two great Baptist women, for the establishment of an *interdenominational* Day of Prayer for Foreign Missions: in 1896 these two Days were joined in an interdenominational Day of Prayer for Missions, which in turn was replaced in 1927 by an interdenominational *World* Day of Prayer on which the women in fifty nations unite their hearts and voices in a service that flows about the world, and give of their means for designated interdenominational service.

In 1892, as a volunteer labor of love, two members of the Woman's Executive Committee prepared a simple *Prayer Calendar* that societies might unitedly remember in prayer the missionaries of that Board on designated days: happily this Calendar became a joint publication for both Home and Foreign Missions and in 1918 appeared as the *Year Book of Prayer for Missions.*

We have seen that the women in the first half of the Nineteenth Century established "Honorary Memberships" by the payment of a fixed sum, that they asked for public "credit" for their gifts, that they sent "boxes" and letters to those who represented them on the mission field. Methods may vary, information has become more precise, more Presbyterian women are engaged in the work until today about a quarter of a million of women are enrolled in the societies throughout the United States. What an inspiration would it be if we could visualize the added numbers of women of many lands who have also formed missionary societies for prayer and study and giving.

The devotion and the service of missionaries at home and abroad have taught the word of God to those who knew it not, and they have wonderfully instilled into the hearts of their hearers that the gospel of Christ is a *sharing* gospel—that as they have received the Word so must they tell it to others.

In Africa may be found small groups of native women out under the trees, studying and praying and bringing their gifts. Wherever the Word has been accepted are societies of Christian women, in Japan, in China, in India, in both the Near East and the Far East, in South and Central America, in Mexico and the West Indies, wherever missionaries of the Presbyterian Church have gone—the tale must run around the world, to tell "How It Grew," this great Woman's Organization of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. What a joy it is to remind ourselves anew that our God is the God of all nations and of all peoples!

We would wish to join with at least one of the distant societies which, absent in body, are one with us in spirit: let us take our "wishing carpet" and attend a woman's missionary society in the village of Luliani, in the Country of India.

EPISODE VI

MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S SOCIETY (Anjuman-i-Masturat) IN THE VILLAGE OF LULIANI, IN THE COUNTRY OF INDIA*

SCENE: Luliani, India

Characters:

LEADER, a youngish woman who has been educated in a Christian training school and is now the wife of the village pastor-teacher of the Christian community in the village of LULIANI, in northern India, a woman in her early twenties.

Her little daughter BITIA, a nine- or ten-year-old girl, who likes to help her mother with her duties in the meeting.

SHANTI, a young bride, a daughter of the village, who has returned for her first visit home after her marriage, probably about 16 years old.

MIRIAM, a girl who was graduated from the mission boarding school at Rakha; recently married to one of the leading young men of the community; she is about eighteen years old.

CHAUDRAIN, the wife of an elder of the church, an elderly woman, gentle and spiritual, obviously respected as a leader in spite of her lack of education.

CHAMELI, a middle-aged woman, a widow.

GULABO, an ordinary village woman.

MULABAI, an ordinary village woman.

RAJ KUMARI, a stout woman, a "raw" village type of loud voice and somewhat uncouth manners, though a genuine good-natured sort. She is new in the Christian experience and not too well acquainted with the proper behavior at such a meeting. In her breathless, late arrival, somewhat fussy concern with her children and desire to make remarks out of turn, she can be used to furnish a little touch of very typical humor.

A small baby, carried on Raj Kumari's hip as she enters and held in her lap during the meeting.

MASIH CHARAN, the small six-year-old son of Raj Kumari who sits beside his mother and acts as a child that age would act, a bit restless and inclined to wander around but always rather ostentatiously rebuked and pulled back into place by his mother.

Several more village women may be added, if desired, and if the stage setting seems to indicate a large number. If they are used, they should be so placed as to allow the essential positions of the characters on the chart to remain the same. Especially important are the positions of Raj Kumari, Miriam, Mulabi, Shanti, and the Leader.

Costumes:

CHAUDRAIN should wear a simple, plain sari.

* By Mrs. John B. Weir, Dehra Dun, India.

CHAMELI, the widow, should wear the plainest garb of all, probably plain white with no jewelry of any kind.

SHANTI should be colorful as her dowry garments would be and should wear jewelry, especially one heavy bracelet that will lend real meaning to her sacrifice of it at the time of the offering.

MULABAI, if possible, should wear a saffron colored sari, the color of the Indian holy men and women.

(As the scene opens, the LEADER *and* SHANTI *are putting the finishing touches to the arrangement of the courtyard of the* LEADER'S *house where the meeting is to be held. It is already fifteen minutes past time but no one has yet come, beside these two.)*

LEADER to SHANTI (*arranging one of the old bits of rag carpet*): Now, is that all right?

SHANTI: You called them all twice—what *can* be keeping them! Oh, here's some one.

(*Enter* CHAUDRAIN *and* MIRIAM: *All four exchange greetings "Salaam ji," bowing as they speak.*)

LEADER: Come on in and sit down.

(*The others enter, each exchanging greetings with the* LEADER *and the others; the entrance should be made as quickly as possible and the greetings should be kept up constantly and varied; general movement without confusion.*)

(*All are seated in places as indicated on the chart; sitting cross-legged tailor-fashion, if possible; certainly* RAJ KUMARI *should sit thus and cradle the baby in her lap, covering her with the end of the sari she wears over her head, leaving both hands free for her small son.*)

(MASIH CHARAN—*child—squats first on his haunches in the center facing the* LEADER *with back to audience; is dragged back by his mother, looks teary, nose is wiped by his mother, using the corner of her sari, as she says:*)

RAJ KUMARI: Imp, sit down and behave as I told you.

(MASIH CHARAN *subsides close to her side until he again gets courage to gaze about at whatever catches his interest. A bit later he gets up and goes to the corner to get a drink from the earthenware vessel standing there.*)

CHAMELI (*looking around the circle*): And isn't Tarabai coming today?

CHAUDRAIN (*shaking her head*): She's gone.

RAJ KUMARI (*in a loud voice with a "gossipy" manner*): I saw her at the goddess's shrine, offering her curds and sugar. Her baby has been sick for weeks and weeks.

CHAUDRAIN (*sadly*): How sad it is that she does not yet know how to pray to the only real Healer!

MIRIAM: And our Doctor Miss Sahib was at the canal for a clinic only yesterday. Tarabai knew, for I told her myself. But she does not understand the value of good medicine, either!

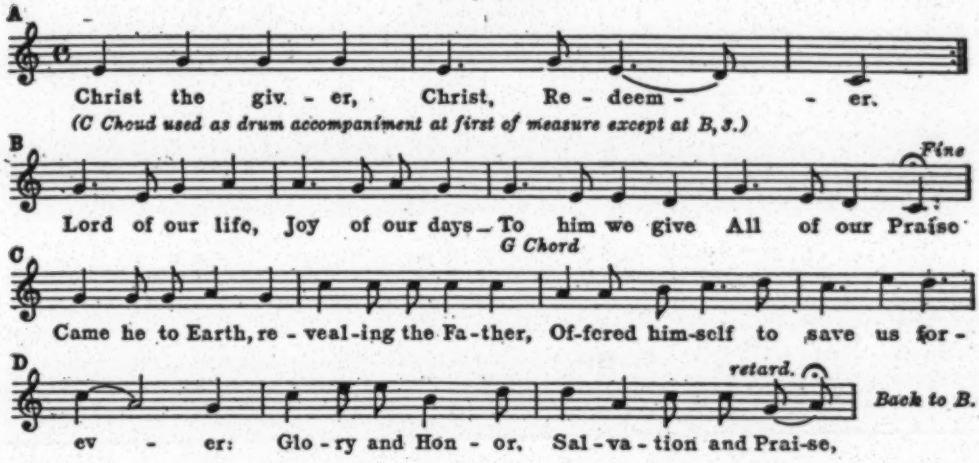
(*During this conversation,* SHANTI *and* BITIA *have taken the song books up from the bed and distributed them to those who can read; the quiet refusal*

or passing on to another of the books by those who cannot read tells its own story.)

LEADER: Shall we begin? JaiJai is a song we all know. The girls at Rakha School love to sing it, do they not, Miriam?

MIRIAM: (*Nodding assent, starts the song and all sing heartily.*)

Jai, Jai


A
Christ the giv - er, Christ, Re - deem - - er.
(C Chord used as drum accompaniment at first of measure except at B, 3.)
B
Fine
Lord of our life, Joy of our days — To him we give All of our Praise
G Chord
C
Came he to Earth, re - veal - ing the Fa - ther, Of - fered him - self to save us for -
D
retard.
Back to B.
ev - er: Glo - ry and Hon - or, Sal - va - tion and Prai - se,

LEADER: Chaudrain, will you pray?

(*All put their hands with palms together and bow their heads.*)

CHAUDRAIN: Oh, Heavenly Father, here we are, a few unworthy women but we know that where one or two are gathered in Christ's Name, He will be with them. So we ask Thy blessing on this little group. In His Name, Amen.

LEADER: Miriam is just back from presbyterial meeting where she got some good ideas for our program for this year. Miriam, tell us about them.

MIRIAM (*rising in her place and opening a little paper-covered notebook*): It was a new experience for me to go to a meeting in the big city and to meet there women of the city church as well as women from the village like myself. I had never quite realized before how truly our little group here is a part of a great sisterhood all over India, and even around the world, of women who are followers of the Master. Why even some of our problems are the same. Both the city and we village women agreed that the most important subject for us to study this year is how to make our homes better and truly Christian. One of the first questions we must decide is "By what standards shall we choose mates for our children?"

RAJ KUMARI (*vigorously*): What can *we* do about that? Don't the elders of the family decide?

CHAUDRAIN: But what if they choose for my daughter a boy from a family that are still idolators?

(*General remarks, almost excited chatter, ensues, each turning to discuss the situation with her neighbor; real agitation indicates what a vital question it is in their lives.*)

LEADER (*quieting them with these words*): Must we not think of the future as

does Jiua Ram? Only yesterday he was saying to Babuji, "I want a wife who will never sacrifice to idols, no matter what the circumstances may be. The mother of *my* children must be so firm in the Christian faith that when our parents die, our household will continue in the Christian way." Babuji is helping him make arrangements for a Christian marriage. But, Miriam, are there more questions we should consider about the Christian home?

MIRIAM: Oh yes, many! The leader at the presbyterial grouped a number under the subject, "How shall we recognize a Christian home in a non-Christian community." There are the matters of educating *both* our boys and girls; not marrying our daughters before they are fourteen; lack of quarreling among the family and with the neighbors. Some of these may not be problems for other than village women but there are two which concern *all* Christian homes everywhere, the stewardship of our possessions and of our time, and our need for devotions together as families.

LEADER: Certainly we shall not lack for important discussion subjects in our meetings this year, and we are all evidently much interested. But now we shall stop for our offering. Before that, Bitia will read the verses for today—a saying of the Apostle Paul about families.

BITIA (*reads, but really recites, Moffett's translation*): "Then, I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name and nature, praying Him out of the wealth of His glory to grant you a mighty increase of strength, by His spirit. May you know what is the breadth and length, and benefit and depth of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge."

(*As* BITIA *finishes, the* LEADER *rises from her hassock and places it forward in the center, covers it with a white cloth on which is a red cross, and takes from the bed or a niche in the wall a coin* (25c) *placing it on the hassock as she says*:)

LEADER: We are giving today to the World Emergency Fund to help the German, Swedish, and other missions whose support has all been cut off; thus we can have a share in keeping Christ's work going forward in our land.

(*She steps back and comes around the back of the circle to left front stage and stands back of* MIRIAM. *Each comes to the center, places her offering on the hassock, and goes back quietly to her place.*

MIRIAM *places four eggs on the hassock.*

CHAMELI *brings a flat basket or tray of rice and places it on the floor at the right of the hassock.*

BITIA *brings several pennies.*

RAJ KUMARI *puts a tray of ata—whole wheat flour—on the floor at left of the hassock.* MASIH CHARAN *trails behind her and stands gazing around.*

RAJ KUMARI *to* MASIH CHARAN: Aren't you going to give yours, too?

(*She helps him unpin the safety pin from the little pocket on his shirt, take out a penny, and put it on the hassock.*)

While this is going on, CHAUDRAIN *brings six eggs;* GULABO *brings a brass vessel* (*India Lota if possible*); (*Any other women used may bring offerings of this sort, taking care only that each one's offering may be seen*

easily as she places it on the hassock and there be no confusion.) From here on, only MULABAI *and* SHANTI *may bring their offerings.* MULABAI *goes to the hassock, untying as she goes three half dollars from three different knots in the end of her sari; she places them slowly and impressively one at a time on the hassock.*

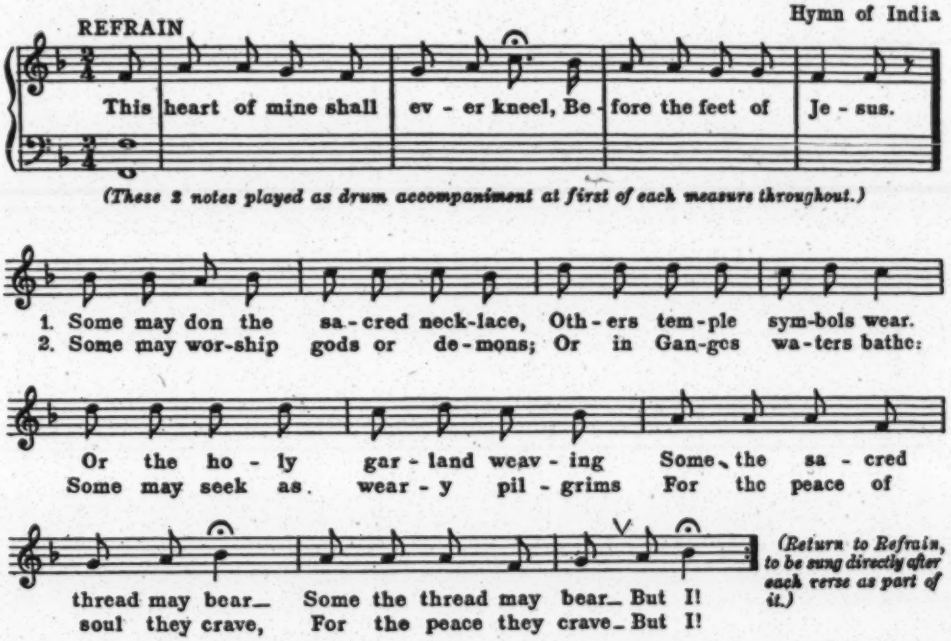
All act excited—one or two half rising from their seats; suppressed exclamations and gestures of surprise.

CHAUDRAIN: Mulabai! How did you *ever* get that much money together to bring?

MULABAI (*stands still, facing partly toward* CHAUDRAIN *and partly to the audience*): I sold my wedding shawl. (*Proudly*) It was embroidered in silk. (*Pauses a second as though enjoying the thought of its beauty; then radiantly*) But what is *that* to give to my Lord!

(*All begin to sing softly the second song "This Heart of Mine Shall Ever Kneel" and continue singing till the end of the scene.* MULABAI *returns slowly to her place and sits down.*)

This Heart of Mine Shall Ever Kneel

Hymn of India

REFRAIN
This heart of mine shall ev - er kneel, Be - fore the feet of Je - sus.
(These 2 notes played as drum accompaniment at first of each measure throughout.)
1. Some may don the sa - cred neck-lace, Oth - ers tem - ple sym-bols wear.
2. Some may wor-ship gods or de - mons; Or in Gan-ges wa - ters bathe:
Or the ho - ly gar - land weav - ing Some the sa - cred
Some may seek as wear - y pil - grims For the peace of
thread may bear— Some the thread may bear— But I!
soul they crave, For the peace they crave— But I!
(Return to Refrain, to be sung directly after each verse as part of it.)

(SHANTI *has risen in her place during* MULABAI'S *answer. She stands looking at and fingering her bracelet as though undecided; finally she draws it slowly off her arm, walks forward and places it on the hassock. As she walks back to her place, the lighting should so change as to throw the women into shadow and let a bright white light fall just on the hassock and the offerings, and especially on the cross. The curtain is drawn slowly while the singing gets softer and finally fades away.*)

Properties for Episode VI:

The meeting is held in the courtyard of the little house of the leader. The back wall of the stage should represent the front wall of the house. That and the two side walls should give the impression of plain rough walls made of sun-dried brick—if anything in the way of stage setting is attempted. The background is, of course, not essential.

Door of the house should be at one side of the center.

Bright colored, large calendar is hanging on the wall, the typical one would be of a picture of the King and Queen of England.

Also *some large Bible pictures,* or a whole Sunday school roll, hang on the wall.

Two little niches in the wall would be the typical shelves for a bright ornament, a brass dish, or even a bottle of medicine.

Bed. At the left back stage is a low cot of some kind, covered with a darkish print cover. This serves as the table for the song books, the Bible from which Bitia reads the Scripture, the white cloth to be put on the hassock for the thank offering. One end, therefore, is in easy reach of the leader.

Low hassock on which the Leader sits.

Small rag rugs or largish strips of carpet may be arranged in the semi-circle on which the women sit; one or two rugs or mats should be left for the leader and Shanti to be arranging as the scene opens.

At Right backstage should be *earthenware vessels* for drinking water. They could be put on a low table to be more easily seen, but low enough to be accessible to the little boy who goes to get a drink during the early part of the meeting. On top of the mouth of one vessel should be an inverted aluminum or "brass glass" from which the boy drinks.

Song Books may be little paper covered books, the most typical covering would be newspaper or plain brown paper but some color would lend them a more interesting appearance! They should contain the words of the two songs used during the meeting, but the music hardly seems necessary if well learned in advance.
There need be only four or five books, thus tacitly indicating the illiteracy problem.

Suggested Lighting:

During the early part of the meeting, the appearance of daylight.

During the Bible reading, change to softer shade, perhaps yellow.

During Mulabai's gift and answer, a distinctly brighter hue focused on her, perhaps an orange, something to indicate radiance.

During Shanti's contemplation and giving of the bracelet, again a softer shade blending into some deeper shade, possibly blue-gray, that will heighten and even change the color of the costumes.

As the singing gets softer, the women and background should fade out and a white light be focused on the hassock and the cross as the curtain is drawn and the singing dies away.

THE STORY

Narrator: It is out of bits such as are recorded here that women of today are able to reconstruct somewhat the background of the woman's organization in the Presbyterian Church. A bit here, a bit there, and the panorama of history unrolls and takes on a semblance of life.

Perhaps the women of today have been tempted to point with pride to the methods they employ, to the breadth of their vision; but let them not fail to give honor to those women of the last century who with no headquarters to provide information or stimulation, with most limited knowledge of specific needs in their own land or in foreign lands, with probably most vague knowledge as to where those far-away lands really were, yet heeded the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," and out of their limited monetary possessions gave as they could; women who were rich in prayer began this service by women, for women and children the world around, and it is through women of prayer that it still moves forward.

One wonders whether in the early years Christian sea captains sailing the seas of the world for spices and silks, for ivory and teakwood, may not have formed a major publicity department for the church at home. And it might have been those same sea captains who, meeting war the world around, as early as 1836 influenced one presbytery to overture the General Assembly urging it to call all Christian denominations to consider using their influence with all Christian nations to adopt some plans for the settlement of disputes without recourse to war! The Assembly voted that while they believed it was the duty of Christians to work toward that end, yet since there was room for diversity of opinion it deemed such action inexpedient! One hundred and six years later the Church confronts the same problem!

Happily it has been largely the same women in the organizations who have served the cause of missions both at home and abroad: not only were *Prayer Calendars* and magazines united, but program-making and publicity activities have come ever closer together. Societies, local, presbyterial, and synodical, that began with the announced intention of working for Foreign Missions, or for Home Missions, gradually came to a realization that the world is one and that no one part can be viewed apart from the whole. Today the forty-two synodical societies are joint home and foreign as are the 264 presbyterial societies and practically all of the 6,609 local societies, thus binding in united service for the needs of the world about a quarter of a million of Presbyterian women in the United States.

And, again happily, the particular service undertaken by the woman's organization has not only stimulated them to enlarge and develop it, but increasingly enlarged their cooperation in all the work of the Church and its Boards.

Early in the history of the woman's organizations we find the women emphasizing to the constituency that giving through the women's societies must be *an addition* to their giving through the church—the phrase a "second mile" had not then been coined but the women believed and practiced the principle therein expressed. Repeated analytical studies have proven that this injunction has been

heeded and that as a rule women who give to the church offerings are the same women who give through missionary societies or women's associations.

There must have been periodical fluctuations in the amount of gifts in the earlier days for in 1873 the General Assembly said: "The *revived* interest of our Christian women in the work of Christian Missions is a hopeful sight: their contributions are, we trust, *the precious firstfruits of a plentiful harvest.*"

In 1923 Women's Boards were by action of the General Assembly united with the general Boards serving in similar areas and for similar causes. Training had prepared them for such consolidations and these were effected with no dislocation of organization or service. But in the local church, as well as presbyterially and synodically, the woman's organization continues as an educational and motivating missionary force, and continues to be the source of large annual gifts.

Through the years problems many, yes, but also ever increasing joys. The millions of lives that have been remoulded, the ever-widening circles of influence going from person to person, the transformation of communities through the preaching of the gospel—all of these may be among the intangibles that cannot be reproduced except through the sympathy of the understanding heart.

But there are great tangibles of gifts totalling $79,955,000 which have been given through the woman's organization of the Presbyterian Church. These our imagination may translate in terms of hospitals in areas where otherwise the sick would have no shelter, in terms of doctors and nurses giving to the ill that devoted and tender care that we in Christian America expect and receive: these dollars are further expressed in terms of schools and colleges for both boys and girls, the latter of whom in many lands are not considered worthy of education and training but who in these Christian schools not only have proven themselves good students, but in untold cases have become brilliant leaders: these dollars again may be interpreted in terms of Christian churches in areas where without them would exist only a leadership that did not recognize the God of the whole world.

May we not also count among the tangibles, that vivifying awareness of life's fullness, that awakening to the brotherhood of man, the development of a deep and fructifying social consciousness, the power to influence individuals and governments toward righteousness and toward compassion. All these effects follow in the train of those men and women who through the years have gone out as Christian missionaries into "all the world, preaching the gospel."

And today, in the midst of war and a world's anguish, there are discernible signs that indeed a "just and durable peace" may owe more to the Christian Church and the Christian missionaries than to any one other influence. The steadfastness and the spirit that these have engendered are still with the people of the earth.

Women of today, we are in a marvelous measure the inheritors both of those who through the years taught Presbyterian women to "carry on" at home from generation to generation, and also of those intrepid women who through the years have endured hardships, loneliness, and sometimes death, to translate our gifts of dollars into Christian lives, thus giving us a real share in building the Kingdom of God on Earth. Let us be worthy of our heritage!